

Smackdown – February 19, 2021: Put It On The List

Smackdown

Date: February 19, 2021

Location: Tropicana Field, St. Petersburg, Florida

Commentators: Michael Cole, Corey Graves

It's the go home show for Elimination Chamber and I'm really not sure how much more there is to add to the show. Most of the matches would seem to be set, but there is always room to add one or two more things. The main event this time around is a six man tag featuring all of the Elimination Chamber participants. Let's get to it.

[Here are last week's results if you need a recap.](#)

Here's Edge to open things up. He has a big decision to make and this Sunday, things are going to get a lot clearer. You have the two World Titles on the line but Roman Reigns is being the smart one by facing the winner of the Elimination Chamber. That means there are thirteen possible opponents for Wrestlemania so he needs to start evaluating things.

Cue Roman Reigns, flanked by Jey Uso and Paul Heyman, for a pretty long entrance. Roman says there aren't thirteen possible opponents because there is one main event. You have Drew McIntyre who is a main eventer, but Roman Reigns is the main event. Edge thinks Reigns is sounding insecure because he needs to face Edge to be in the main event of Wrestlemania. Whomever Edge faces is the main event, be it anyone from Raw or Smackdown.

Cue Sami Zayn to say he's the real champion because he's the champion of the people. As Sami asks his camera crew to film him pointing at the sign, Jey superkicks him down. Reigns stares Edge down and hands the title off to Heyman before

opening his hands, seemingly in peace. Reigns walks over to Edge and whispers something in his ear (which we can't hear) before leaving with Heyman and Uso.

Apollo Crews vs. Shinsuke Nakamura

Big E., on his couch, is on commentary. Before the match, we get a quick interview from Apollo, talking about how he doesn't like being told to go back to catering. Nakamura runs him over for an early two to start but Crews nails a dropkick to send Nakamura outside. That's enough to send him into Big E.'s snack tray, which means the big staredown to send us to a break.

Back with Nakamura hitting his sliding German suplex out of the corner for two. Crews grabs a spinebuster for two but gets pulled into a cross armbreaker, which Nakamura turns into a rollup for the pin at 5:58. Not enough shown to rate but it was just a quick match to have Crews and Big E. out there.

Post match Crews jumps Nakamura again and goes for the steps but Big E. says that isn't happening. Big E. tells Crews to go to the back but Crews jumps him from behind with the steps. Crews isn't going back to catering and throws the steps and Big E. back inside. The referee intervenes and Big E. rolls to the floor, with Crews throwing the steps onto him (with the camera not showing the crash of course) to leave Big E. laying. Medics come out immediately and, after the break, Big E. is taken out on a stretcher.

I'm sure this sets up a title match, but wouldn't it be better to have Crews win, get denied a shot because Big E. has beaten him time after time, and then attack anyway? This made him feel like even more of a loser than he was when Big E. beat him over and over and that's not the best way to go.

As Big E. is wheeled out, here's Seth Rollins to say that was a tragedy, just like what happened last week. We see everyone walking out on Rollins last week, which earned Cesaro a big

beating after the segment. As a result, Rollins has written a formal protest to WWE because everyone ruined last week out of fear. There are already millions who have embraced the vision for a better future, but the biggest loser is Cesaro. That's why Cesaro was taken out last week. Everyone should embrace the vision, unlike that loser Cesaro. Embrace the vision. This is really the best they have for Rollins?

Edge comes up to Kevin Owens in the back and says that he understands what it's like to have to keep getting back up. Owens appreciates that because he has come close to winning the Universal Title time after time over the last few months so now it is all he can think about. They appreciate the idea of facing each other at Wrestlemania.

Big E. is taken to the ambulance.

Riott Squad vs. Tamina/Natalya

Neither gets an entrance, as they shouldn't for the sake of saving some time. Riott chops away at Tamina to start before handing it off to Liv for some kicks of her own. Morgan's springboard something is knocked out of the air so it's off to Natalya to strike away. Riott comes back in for a Codebreaker into an STO for two as Billie Kay, in a Tamina shirt with Natalya ears, comes out. That's enough of a distraction for Tamina to hit a swinging Rock Bottom to finish Riott at 3:03.

Rating: D+. This was the latest match between one team thrown together and another team who isn't likely to make it to the title scene anytime soon. Instead, The Riott Squad is the kind of team that only exists for the sake of putting other teams over. The women's tag division is awful right now, but that has been the case for a pretty long time now. Just keep throwing teams together I guess, because it's not like the division is going to mean anything anytime soon.

Billie comes in to celebrate with them and gets laid out.

Edge runs into King Corbin, who says he's the main event of Wrestlemania. Corbin talks about a \$39,000 watch but Edge holds up a phone, which tells the time and takes pictures.

It's time for Ding Dong Hello with Bayley, who says it's episode dos, which means two in case you're like Michael Cole and don't speak Spanish. Nia Jax and Shayna Baszler are the guests and come in through the door, with Jax talking about how Bayley shouldn't be upset that they took the titles from her. They're glad Bayley got rid of Sasha Banks, because Banks is such a waste of time. Like, almost as bad as Bianca Belair.

Cue Reginald, who says Banks is like a fine wine and the two of them are like a boxed wine. He thinks Belair and Banks could take the Tag Team Titles so here's Banks to interrupt. Banks doesn't like Reginald speaking for him but promises to beat Belair at Wrestlemania. Cue Belair to say not so fast and issue the six person tag challenge.

Bianca Belair/Reginald/Sasha Banks vs. Nia Jax/Shayna Baszler/Bayley

Banks strikes away at Baszler to start and manages to take her down, but Reginald comes in for the stretching and then leaves. Jax takes Banks down so Bayley, in street clothes, comes in to stomp away. Baszler starts working on the leg but Jax misses a running splash in the corner. We settle down to Nia yelling at Reginald about how she isn't the boxed wine. Reginald starts picking up the pace with the dodges, only to get run over again. Bayley and Baszler beat on Banks outside as Nia catches Reginald's crossbody. A double dropkick to the back puts Reginald on top of Jax for the surprise pin at 5:05.

Rating: D+. I'm still not sure where they're going with this whole thing but it's still weird to see men and women in the same match. Jax losing doesn't mean anything anymore after how things have been going for her in recent weeks, but this was certainly a strange way to go with everything. Throw in the

fact that it might be a one off deal and it's even weirder.

Cesaro feels sorry for Seth Rollins, who had the chance to come back as someone new but then did the same thing he did before he left. There is time to deal with Rollins later, because Cesaro need to go win the Elimination Chamber and then the Universal Title. Edge comes up and Wrestlemania is teased.

Rey Mysterio/Dominik Mysterio vs. Alpha Academy

Dolph Ziggler and Robert Roode are on commentary, where they insist that they are not ducking the Street Profits. Dominik can't get very far by trying to wrestle Gable so it's off to Rey vs. Otis. That goes badly for Rey as well as it's a World's Strongest Slam into a big splash. Instead of covering, Otis hits a splash, followed by a few more, which is a DQ at 1:30 when Otis won't listen to the referee telling him to stop.

Post match Rey is destroyed some more, including a middle rope splash.

Edge and Daniel Bryan bond over bringing their careers back to life. Bryan appreciates that and thinks Edge can thank him by challenging him after Bryan wins the title on Sunday.

Post break, Rey is very slowly helped to the back.

Daniel Bryan, Cesaro and Kevin Owens discuss how often Kevin Owens has turned on people. Bryan: "There have been so many times. I should have made a list." Owens says they won't have to worry about a Stunner tonight. Just worry about it on Sunday. Or maybe two, three, four. Cesaro: "At least he's honest." Bryan: "Is he?"

Reginald brings Carmella some wine and tries to hide the fact that he was in the match earlier. She's not mad, because she knows he'll do the right thing. Or else. Carmella drinks the wine, deems it disgusting, and throws it in his face.

Sasha Banks and Bianca Belair are getting a Women's Tag Team Title match on Sunday.

Sami Zayn/King Corbin/Jey Uso vs. Daniel Bryan/Kevin Owens/Cesaro

Edge is on commentary as Bryan forearms Uso into the corner. Cesaro comes in for a double slam so Jey bails over to Corbin for the tag. A few shots to the face mean it's off to Bryan to uppercut Sami into the corner as well. Corbin comes back in for some knees to the ribs but it's right back to Cesaro to clean house. Some uppercuts put Sami on the floor but Corbin throws him back in like a good partner. That's fine with Cesaro, who can't quite get the Swing. Instead Corbin comes back in and gets Swung into a commercial.

Back with the Swing continuing (now that's a well done editing trick) but Cesaro gets sent outside and thrown over the announcers' table. Paul Heyman has joined commentary as Cesaro gets beaten up in the corner, including some choking from Corbin. Uso comes back in and hammers away, allowing the tag back to Corbin to continue the hammering away.

Cesaro finally gets in a shot to Corbin and the hot tag brings in Bryan, which Cole and Heyman ignore to keep bickering. Everything breaks down with Owens hitting the Cannonball off the apron to Uso. Zayn rolls Bryan up for two and hits the Blue Thunder Bomb for two with Cesaro making the save. Corbin knocks Cesaro outside as Bryan butterfly superplexes Zayn down, setting up the YES Lock for the tap at 13:07.

Rating: C+. This was fun, though it wasn't like it means anything other than some minor momentum for Sunday. I like Bryan getting a little push, as they really could go in a bunch of different ways for the Chamber. Bryan is certainly one of them, but it's not like there is any secret to the fact that this is all about Edge vs. Reigns at Wrestlemania in the end.

Post match the Parade of Finishers is on, with Edge getting in a spear on Uso but getting speared down by Roman Reigns to end the show (note that Reigns just sticks his hand out so Heyman can hand him the title, because that's what Reigns sees him as being good for).

Overall Rating: C. The reason this show worked out so well was that it didn't drag. They kept things moving and got to the point, even if they are still trying to hide the fact that Reigns vs. Edge seems all but carved into stone for Wrestlemania. I'm not sure what a lot of the other people are going to get to do, but they had a nice build up to Sunday, which is a nice start on the way there. Good enough show, and it did a nice job of advancing a lot of stories.

Results

Shinsuke Nakamura b. Apollo Crews – Cradle

Natalya/Tamina b. Riott Squad – Swinging Rock Bottom to Riott

Bianca Belair/Reginald/Sasha Banks b. Nia Jax/Shayna Baszler/Bayley – Crossbody to Jax

Rey Mysterio/Dominik Mysterio b. Alpha Academy via DQ when Otis continued attacking Rey

Daniel Bryan/Cesaro/Kevin Owens b. Jey Uso/King Corbin/Sami Zayn – YES Lock to Zayn

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Smackdown – February 12, 2021: The Not So Subtle Difference

Smackdown

Date: February 12, 2021

Location: Tropicana Field, St. Petersburg, Florida

Commentators: Michael Cole, Corey Graves

We're less than two weeks away from Elimination Chamber but you might not realize it around here. There has not been a single Smackdown match announced for the show but that might be changing this week. Roman Reigns apparently has a big announcement and that could be a good thing. Seth Rollins is back too so let's get to it.

[Here are last week's results if you need a recap.](#)

Here are Roman Reigns, Jey Uso and Paul Heyman for a chat with Adam Pearce, who is already in the ring. Reigns tells Pearce that he isn't waiting on him so let's get on with this. Pearce doesn't call any shots around here and Reigns isn't waiting on Pearce or Edge. Reigns knows that Edge hasn't announced his Wrestlemania match because he knows Reigns will beat him all the way onto a Legends contract.

No one is taking the title from him so Edge is holding out hope that someone pulls a miracle before Wrestlemania.

Speaking of contracts, Pearce has one in his hand and that is

for Reigns' title defense inside the Elimination Chamber. Reigns hands Heyman the mic, who says Reigns' contract says he has to defend the title AT Elimination Chamber rather than INSIDE the Elimination Chamber. Instead, the winner can receive a title shot on the against Reigns, who won't be in the Chamber itself.

Pearce seems to laugh it off but Heyman asks what he's going to do about it. Fire Reigns this close to Wrestlemania? Last year's show didn't have Reigns and it was the lowest attended Wrestlemania of all time. Pearce says it's time to start the qualifying process, and there are going to be two names who don't need qualifying matches. Those would be Jey Uso and Kevin Owens, the latter of whom has Reigns outside the ring and in Pearce's face. Reigns doesn't think Pearce gets this but Heyman says it's going to be on Reigns' time.

Post break Pearce is freaking out over having to get all of the qualifying matches together but Sonya Deville has an idea: a tag team qualifying match with the winning team both getting into the Chamber. Pearce likes the idea, which is good because Sonya has already booked it.

Commentary confirms that the winner of the Chamber match will face Reigns that night.

Elimination Chamber Qualifying Match: Rey Mysterio/Dominik Mysterio vs. King Corbin/Sami Zayn

Before the match, Sami talks about how he and Corbin don't get along but tonight they're working together so WWE can't give the Mysterios the spots in the Chamber. Rey and Dominik start fast by sending them to the floor for the double dives and we take a break. Back with Dominik rolling Sami into the corner and hitting a running elbow. Sami is right back with the Blue Thunder Bomb for two and it's off to Corbin. Everything breaks down and the double 619 hits Corbin, with Rey taking him to the floor. That leaves Dominik to be suplexed into the corner,

setting up the Helluva Kick for the pin at 7:33.

Rating: D+. I'm not sure how much drama there was to this one and that's ok. The Mysterios continue to have problems and a showdown at Wrestlemania wouldn't surprise me. Zayn and Corbin inside the Chamber should work out well as they're the perfect kind of midcarders who could beef things up a little bit.

Dolph Ziggler and Robert Roode come in to see Deville and Pearce. They want in the Elimination Chamber, and are even willing to be in different pods. Sonya gives them a chance, in another tag team qualifying match, against Cesaro and Daniel Bryan.

We look back at Bianca Belair talking to Sasha Banks last week when Carmella and Reginald interfered, earning Reginald a whipping.

Reginald brings Sasha Banks some wine but Banks isn't buying it. She takes the drink anyway and keeps talking to Kalisto.

Here's Big E. for a chat. He is going to be a fighting champion and, after a Gorilla Glue reference, he mentions being past the Apollo Crews chapter...and here's Crews to interrupt. Crews accepts the challenge, but Big E. was going to issue the challenge to anyone here except Crews you see. Big E. was looking forward to Michael Cole accepting the challenge but Crews implies Big E. is scared. Big E. lowers the mic and says he has beaten Crews time after time so go back to catering and get your paycheck. Crews gets in his face and a lot of arguing ensues, with Big E. saying they're done so bring out the next challenger.

Intercontinental Title: Big E. vs. Shinsuke Nakamura

Nakamura is challenging and Big E. powers him around to start. That earns him some kicks down and the champ is in some trouble. It's already time for the Kinshasa but Big E. pulls him into the Big Ending. That's broken up and Nakamura kicks

him in the back of the head. Another Kinshasa is loaded up but Crews runs in to dropkick Big E. for the DQ at 3:24.

Rating: C-. No time for much here as we continue to build towards Crews' final showdown, likely at Elimination Chamber. That should work out well as Crews at least has a bit more of a background after that US Title reign. I liked how serious Big E. got, but saying Crews can't have a match isn't the most heroic thing to do. I don't think there's a turn coming or anything, but it didn't quite feel right.

Video on Seth Rollins.

The locker room comes to the ring for Rollins' return. After a break here's Rollins, with BURN IT DOWN again. He's still in the suit with the one glove though so I'm getting mixed messages here. Rollins is glad to be back and knows that things have changed since he sacrificed himself at Survivor Series. The thing that has changed the most though is him though, because he has become a parent for the first time. He is now the father of a beautiful, perfect baby girl, who has changed his life in ways he never dreamed of.

Rollins sees the talent around here and he wonders where he fits in. Now he knows where that is: Rollins is the great leader that Smackdown needs to push it into the future. Leadership isn't about what they can do for him but what he can do for them. Everyone walks out as Rollins talks about being a leader and a mentor. Rollins says all you have to do for a better Smackdown is embrace the vision. The lights come back up and he realizes that only Cesaro is left at ringside. Then Cesaro shakes his head and leaves as well, only to have Rollins run to the floor and chop block him. The beatdown is on until referees break it up.

Video on the Elimination Chamber.

Bayley vs. Liv Morgan

Ruby Riott is here with Morgan, who starts fast and hammers away. Bayley misses a clothesline and Morgan hits a middle rope dropkick to the floor, meaning it's time for a trip to the floor. A dive off the steps takes a bit too long for Morgan and Bayley sends her hard into the barricade instead. Back in and Bayley hits a shoulder breaker to rock Morgan but it's an enziguri to give Morgan two. Cue Billie Kay to offer Riott her resume, which Riott throws away. The referee gets rid of them though and it's the Rose Plant to finish Morgan at 3:45.

Rating: D+. The story continues and that's one of the things I really wish WWE would stop. Bayley beat one half of the Riott Squad thanks to Billie messing up last week and now she did it to the other half this week. It was no secret that they were going in this direction after last week and that's because WWE is pretty repetitive. That's not good and it wasn't even much of a match in the first place.

The Street Profits were at Daytona Motor Speedway this week.

Street Profits vs. Otis/Chad Gable

During the entrances, the Profits say they want the titles back and Otis/Gable train for the smoke. Gable takes Dawkins to the mat to start but Dawkins manages to reverse. They send each other into opposite corners for a standoff so Ford comes in instead. An armdrag into an armbar has Ford flailing around but it's back to Dawkins to take Gable down. That doesn't last long as Otis gets the tag and starts to throw Profits around. Ford low bridges Otis to the floor to break up a clothesline though and it's the Cash Out to finish Gable at 4:50.

Rating: C+. This was a pretty snappy match and that was a nice surprise. Gable and Otis work well together and I could go for seeing them develop a bit more in the future. The Profits continue to be great and you know the rematch for the titles has to be coming sooner rather than later. Everyone was

working here though and the pretty short amount of time flew by.

Here's Sasha Banks to talk about Wrestlemania. She has been dealing with Bianca Belair, who is like a little sister. Cue Belair to say Banks isn't the boss of her. Those are fighting words so here are Nia Jax and Shayna Baszler to interrupt. Jax can't believe how big their egos are and asks Shayna if she cares about Belair's pick. Belair shows us the MY HOLE clip from Raw so the brawl is on. Baszler is knocked down so Jax is tripped onto the apron, meaning she has to stop herself from shouting about...well you get the idea. Belair and Banks take out Baszler as well and the two stand tall.

Elimination Chamber Qualifying Match: Bobby Roode/Dolph Ziggler vs. Daniel Bryan/Cesaro

Non-title. Ziggler takes Bryan down for an early two but Cesaro comes in for a double slam. It's off to Roode, who has to avoid the YES Lock, and gets sent outside. Cesaro is right there and is whipped into the steps. Sami Zayn and King Corbin come out to watch and we take a break.

Back with Bryan in trouble as Roode snaps off a suplex for two and hands it back to Ziggler. Bryan takes Ziggler down but Roode decks Cesaro, allowing Bryan to grab a rollup for two. Roode's spinebuster gets two more on Bryan but Ziggler misses a charge in the corner, allowing the hot tag to Cesaro. Everything breaks down and Bryan hits Roode with the running knee. The Fameasser gets two on Cesaro but he's right back up with the Swing into the Sharpshooter to make Ziggler tap at 11:04.

Rating: C+. Another good match between talented teams, even if the Tag Team Titles get their annual smack in the face for the sake of some qualifying matches. In this case I'm not sure who else could have taken the loss, but I would have preferred it not to be the champs. Bryan and Cesaro winning was mostly but

not entirely obvious and that's a nice feeling.

Post match Jey Uso, Sami Zayn and King Corbin all come in for the brawl. Everyone goes at it until Kevin Owens runs in for the Stunnerfest. Roman Reigns watches from the back as Owens sits down, saying that he's coming for Reigns to end the show.

Overall Rating: C. This show worked well for me for one reason: those tag team qualifying matches. Both of them were pretty good, but the real reason they were nice to see was they were different. Instead of the usual four singles matches, they actually threw in something fresh for a change and that's nice to see. Not so much the idea was brilliant, but it was a change from the norm and I can absolutely go for that over the same old stuff that they do all the time. The rest of the show was fine enough, but I like that they're actually taking some different paths week to week.

Results

Sami Zayn/King Corbin b. Rey Mysterio/Dominik Mysterio – Helluva Kick to Dominik

Big E. b. Shinsuke Nakamura via DQ when Apollo Crews interfered

Bayley b. Liv Morgan – Rose Plant

Street Profits b. Chad Gable/Otis – Cash Out to Gable

Cesaro/Daniel Bryan b. Dolph Ziggler/Robert Roode – Sharpshooter to Ziggler

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Smackdown – February 5, 2021: We're In A New Reality

Smackdown

Date: February 5, 2021

Location: Tropicana Field, St. Petersburg, Florida

Commentators: Michael Cole, Corey Graves

The Royal Rumble has come and gone and, should the men's winner Edge take the blue route, he will be challenging Roman Reigns, who retained the Universal Title. He has about nine weeks to decide where to go, as does Bianca Belair, who won the women's Royal Rumble. Let's get to it.

[Here's the Royal Rumble if you need a recap.](#)

We open with a recap of the Royal Rumbles.

Here are Roman Reigns (Cole: "The ever aloof."), Jey Uso and Paul Heyman to get things going. Reigns says he doesn't says he doesn't like talking about the past and would rather look to the future, because the future seems to be Edge. Reigns goes on a rant about how he's the best (including calling himself WWE Champion) and asking why Edge is wasting time on Raw and NXT. Why not come here and bring yourself to the island of relevancy?

Now why is he out here first anyway? Edge is making the head of the table wait? Heyman says Edge is here so he needs to get

out here right now. Heyman: "Music and entrance for Edge please. PYRO FOR EDGE PLEASE!" No one shows up and Heyman whispers something to Reigns, who does not seem pleased. Reigns isn't happy with Edge disrespecting him and gets serious, saying Edge is going to give him his decision by the end of the night.

King Corbin vs. Dominick Mysterio

Rey Mysterio is here with Dominick but Corbin jumps both of them on the way to the ring, including launching Rey off the stage. We start after a break with Dominick firing off a dropkick but getting knocked down in a hurry. Rey is having his knee examined as Corbin continues to hammer away and grabs a chinlock. Corbin elbows him down again and asks if Rey has been training Dominick.

Back up and Dominick manages to send him outside for the dive as Rey drags himself to ringside. We take a break and come back with Dominick hitting a neckbreaker for two. Deep Six plants Dominick for two but he sends Corbin outside again. Rey has gone underneath the ring and grabs Corbin's leg, setting up the 619. The frog splash gives Dominick the pin at 9:23.

Rating: C-. Well that was pretty nefarious. I'm not exactly feeling what is coming off as a bit of a Dominick heel leaning but Dominick vs. Rey could be somewhat interesting if that is where we wind up going. That being said, having Corbin involved is not exactly the best way to go with anything, but that hasn't stopped WWE before.

We look at Sami Zayn interfering in the Intercontinental Title match two weeks ago.

Big E. talks about being ready to fight tonight to defend his Intercontinental Title. Much like Lady Liberty, bring him your tired, hungry, bearded and bald because we are going to fight for this prize.

Daniel Bryan vs. Cesaro

They start fast with Bryan going after the arm and then backdropping Cesaro out to the floor. The dive takes Cesaro down again but he blasts Bryan with an uppercut back inside. We see Shinsuke Nakamura watching from the back before Bryan kicks the springboard corkscrew uppercut out of the air. A YES Kick gets two but Cesaro (who has been cut open on the side of his head) is back up with a torture rack into a backbreaker. The Swing sets up the Sharpshooter...and Bryan taps at 4:14.

Rating: C. I wouldn't have bet on that one but dang if they aren't giving Cesaro a nice something as of late. I'm still far from believing that any of this is going to matter in the long run after being burned far too many times, but it's nice to see for a change. If nothing else, who would have expected such a clean and easy win?

Respect is shown post match.

We look at Bianca Belair winning the Royal Rumble.

We see Bianca Belair's parents watching her win live, including her dad climbing onto the coffee table and then falling over the back of the couch.

Belair is asked who she is going to face but she is so excited and can't listen to everyone telling her what to do. She is going to do it her way and announce her decision soon.

Seth Rollins is back next week. Again.

Bayley vs. Ruby Riott

Liv Morgan is at ringside and Billie Kay is on commentary, where she insists that she was only allegedly thrown out of both the Riott Squad and Royal Rumble. Riott nails an early Riott Kick for two but Bayley throws her face first into the top turnbuckle. It's time to work on the armbar but Riott fights up and sends her face first into the buckle to even

things up.

Riott's rollup gets two so Bayley sends her throat first (a lot of firsts in this one) into the bottom rope. A Stunner over the middle rope sets up another armbar so Billie gets up to shove the ropes closer to Riott. Morgan doesn't like that and gets in an argument with Billie, leaving Riott to get caught with the bulldog driver for the pin at 3:59.

Rating: C-. This was more about the Riott Squad than anything else and that's not the worst thing. Billie continues to be an absolute gem and has come miles after going I guess what you call solo. The resume thing is hilarious and now I'm not sure she even needs to rejoin Peyton Royce. At this point, she's far more entertaining on her own and that's great to see.

Post match Billie offers Bayley a resume.

Edge is here.

Here's Bianca Belair for her big interview after winning the Royal Rumble. Everything has blown up since she won the Royal Rumble and she has had to ask who a lot of people are with all of these texts. Now she has a decision to make because Asuka and Sasha Banks are both interesting opponents. Cue Reginald to say Belair can't beat Sasha or Carmella, which draws out Carmella to say the same thing.

Now it's Sasha coming out to say she isn't looking at Carmella anymore because that's in the rear view mirror. Belair has her attention now because she has seen what Belair can do in the Royal Rumble. Yeah Belair can be the strongest and the fastest but the best? Belair may have it all, but she doesn't have the title. Reginald says Belair will lose if she picks Sasha so Belair whips him out with the hair to wrap things up with no decision.

Roman Reigns is told Edge is here.

Sami Zayn can't believe how unfair everything has been to him but tonight it's time for some happy footage when he gets the Intercontinental Title back.

Otis/Chad Gable vs. Robert Roode/Dolph Ziggler

Non-title and the Street Profits are doing commentary in a window in the corner of the screen. Gable easily outwrestles Ziggler and takes him into the corner, where a dropkick puts Gable down. The Profits try to figure out why they can't get a rematch as Roode suplexes Gable for two. Gable kicks him away though and the hot tag brings in Otis to start throwing people around. The Caterpillar (with the Profits bouncing along with Otis) hits Roode and it's Gable hitting the Rolling Chaos Theory on Ziggler. Roode is back up though and the Glorious DDT finishes Gable at 3:31.

Rating: C. I know the Profits probably got on people's nerves here and that's understandable. However, the thing that made this work was it was different. If there is one thing that WWE really needs to fix, it is how stale their presentation feels. Just throwing something in there like this made the match at least feel different and that's a good thing. WWE needs some fresh ideas and if they are actually trying something, good for them.

We look at the first ever Main Event, thirty three years ago today.

Hulk Hogan (with Jimmy Hart in the background) talks about the match and hypes up Edge's decision. Hogan had absolutely nothing to say here and it was obvious.

Edge meets Shinsuke Nakamura.

Intercontinental Title: Apollo Crews vs. Sami Zayn vs. Big E.

Big E. is defending and Sami is chased outside early. Crews rolls some German suplexes for two on Big E. with Sami coming

in for the save. Sami is sent outside though with Big E. following him, allowing Crews to hit the big flip dive onto the champ. Crews nails a great looking apron moonsault to crush Big E. again but Sami dives off the steps to take him down.

We come back from a break with Sami choking on the ropes but Big E. fights up and snaps off the suplexes to Crews. Sami gets put down as well and there's the double Warrior Splash. With Sami on the floor, Crews hits an enziguri on Big E. but gets dumped to the floor. The release Rock Bottom out of the corner plants Sami for two more but Crews knocks Big E. down again.

Crews' frog splash gets two on Sami, only to have Big E. suplex both of them at the same time. With that crazy power display taken care of, Big E.'s spear through the ropes is cut off by a knee to the face. The Helluva Kick hits Big E. for two with Crews making the save this time. Now Sami is frustrated again so Crews hits him in the head over and over. Crews throws Sami over the timekeeper's table but walks into the Big Ending for the pin at 11:54.

Rating: B. This felt like a really nice B level house show main event. There wasn't a ton of drama about Big E. winning but they had him break enough of a sweat that it felt like a title change could have been a remote possibility. I wouldn't have bet on that in this one, which felt like it went a lot further than it should have. Nice job.

Post match Big E. is all fired up but Crews glares at him from behind.

Seth Rollins is still back next week.

Here's Edge for the big closing segment. Edge talks about how he spent the last seven months dreaming. He was dreaming every mile he logged because he wanted to get back something that was his. Then he outlasted twenty nine of the best in the

world today to win the Royal Rumble. Now he isn't sure who he should face at the Royal Rumble. He asks his family and gets one answer, then he asks his friend and gets another answer. Then he was on his way here tonight and asked someone on the corner and got another answer. Edge: "His name was John. He was a nice guy."

Cue Roman Reigns and company to cut things off though as we get a bit more serious. Edge thinks it's funny that Reigns already needs backup, but Reigns promises that Paul won't make a move. Reigns sends Jey to the bus because he has this himself. Edge has one chance to acknowledge him as the main event of Wrestlemania...but here's Kevin Owens with a Stunner to Reigns before Edge can say a word to end the show. I don't think anyone was really expecting a decision from Edge here and they still have time to set things up in the future, but we're really not done with Owens vs. Reigns?

Overall Rating: C+. Unlike Raw, this show actually had some energy and that's one of the best things that can be said about a big follow up show. They have time to announce the Rumble decisions later, so this was more along the lines of setting up the new reality. We now have Wrestlemania coming up a heck of a lot sooner than later and that is going to dominate everything. It certainly dominated Elimination Chamber, which wasn't even mentioned despite being in just over two weeks. Overall, good show here, with some solid action and a nice feeling that the stakes are being raised.

Results

Dominick Mysterio b. King Corbin – Frog splash

Cesaro b. Daniel Bryan – Sharpshooter

Bayley b. Ruby Riott – Bulldog driver

Robert Roode/Dolph Ziggler b. Otis/Chad Gable – Glorious DDT to Gable

Big E. b. Apollo Crews and Sami Zayn – Big Ending to Crews

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Royal Rumble – 2021: Nothing Else Matters

Royal Rumble 2021

Date: January 31, 2021

Location: Tropicana Field, St. Petersburg, Florida

Commentators: Michael Cole, Corey Graves, Byron Saxton, Samoa Joe, Tom Phillips

It's officially the Road To Wrestlemania and that should only be a good thing. The other major positive this year is how wide open both Rumbles could be, which means we could be in for a lot of drama. Other than that though, it is going to be a bit sad to watch the Rumble with no crowd. Let's get to it.

Kickoff Show: Women's Tag Team Titles: Asuka/Charlotte vs. Nia Jax/Shayna Baszler

Jax and Baszler are challenging and it's Charlotte grappling with Baszler to start. Charlotte gets the better of things and

takes it over to Asuka in the corner for an exchange of kicks with Baszler. Jax and Charlotte come back in with Charlotte driving her into the corner and handing it back to Asuka. That means a running splash in the corner from Jax and Baszler starts pulling on the arm. Asuka fights up and manages a facebuster but Jax is right back with a sitout powerbomb for two.

Baszler comes back in but Asuka gets over for the tag to Charlotte so the pace can pick up. A double Natural Selection drops both challengers and gets two on Baszler. Jax is still down so Baszler hits a hard running knee for two on Charlotte. With Jax and Baszler both on the floor, Charlotte hits a moonsault onto both of them but here's Ric Flair. Charlotte shrugs off the distraction though and grabs the Figure Eight, only to have Lacey Evans pop up with the Woman's Right with brass knuckles to knock Charlotte silly. The big leg from Jax finishes Charlotte for the titles at 10:27.

Rating: C. This could have been on any given Raw but I'm getting scared of the idea of building up to a Charlotte vs. Lacey Evans match at Wrestlemania with all of the focus on Ric. The match was acceptable enough, but the important thing was the title change. Charlotte and Asuka never should have been champions and thankfully this mess of a reign ended in about a month.

The opening video looks at some famous Rumble finishes over the years and how this can mean a new beginning for anyone who could win. Not bad at all.

We recap Goldberg vs. Drew McIntyre for the WWE Title. Goldberg made a surprise return at Raw Legends and challenged McIntyre. There isn't much more to it than that but the key has been that Goldberg returns and wins titles.

Raw World Title: Goldberg vs. Drew McIntyre

McIntyre is defending and a Glasgow Kiss sets up a spear to

Goldberg before the bell. They head outside with Goldberg sending him into the steps and there's a spear through the barricade. McIntyre manages to get back in and the bell rings, with the Claymore hitting for two at about five seconds. Another Claymore misses and the ribs are banged up so Goldberg hits the spear. Another spear connects for two and a not very good Jackhammer gets two on McIntyre (now THAT is something you don't see very often). Goldberg misses another spear and the Claymore retains the title at 2:32. And there's the sigh of relief.

Post match respect is shown and Goldberg says McIntyre passed the test.

Sasha Banks says she is going to be celebrating when she drinks the finest champagne of Carmella's tears.

Smackdown Women's Title: Sasha Banks vs. Carmella

Carmella, with Reginald, is challenging despite having failed to win the title in multiple previous title shots. An early Bank Statement attempt sends Carmella bailing to the floor and the trash talk starts from there. Back in and Banks takes her down with a front facelock before trying the rope walk armdrag. That's broken up and a Reginald distraction lets Carmella knock her down and the chinlock is on. Back up and Carmella takes her to the top but gets knocked away, setting up the Meteora.

Banks comes up favoring her knee so Carmella hammers away and shouts about how much better she is. Carmella gets knocked into the corner again and the slingshot double knees connect for two. Two Amigos connect and Banks is thrown outside, with Reginald making a catch. Sasha headscissors him down so Reginald is ejected but Carmella nails a suicide dive. Back in and a trio of rollups give Banks two each, followed by the Third Amigo. The frog splash hits knees though and Carmella nails a low superkick for two. Not that it matters as Banks

pulls her into the Bank Statement to retain at 10:22.

Rating: C-. Total TV level match here without the most drama in the world. Banks is not about to lose the title to Carmella, who never really felt like that big of a threat. The match worked out fine enough, but the build wasn't great and it felt like more of a matter of killing time with a token title defense more than anything else.

Big E. fires up Xavier Woods in the back, saying they need an hour to take their place among the wrestling gods. Sami Zayn comes up to say they're part of the conspiracy but Kofi Kingston, in gear, comes up to hype up the team. Of note: New Day has matching Brodie Lee/Luke Harper gear.

Bad Bunny, with Booker T., performs his song about Booker T.

Rumble By The Numbers video.

Women's Royal Rumble

90 second intervals, Jerry Lawler is on commentary and Bayley (with COLE cut into the back of her hair because she wants to challenge him after she wins) is in at #1 and Naomi is in at #2. Bayley talks trash to start but Naomi jumps over her and snaps off a hurricanrana (minus most of the snap). A springboard kick to the face sets up the Rear View but neither can get the elimination. Bianca Belair is in at #3 and it's a spinebuster into a handspring moonsault for two on Bayley.

Naomi tries a powerbomb on Belair but they roll around (as in they do something close to cartwheels without letting to, causing Lawler to say "that's how I roll") until Naomi winds up on the apron. Billie Kay is in at #4 but sits in on commentary because the ring is stacked at the moment (her words). Bayley shoulders them both in the corner and it's Shotzi Blackheart, with tank, in at #5.

Billie tries to offer her resume so Shotzi fires said cannon

at her to draw some screams. Shotzi gets in and cleans house as Kay is back on commentary to wait for a better partner. Shayna Baszler is in at #6 so Baszler offers a resume, earning herself a shove into the barricade. To continue the tradition, Baszler gets in and hits a bunch of people but no one has been eliminated yet, though Billie still hasn't gotten in the ring.

It's Toni Storm in at #7 and THIS TIME FOR SURE for Billie, but this time Toni just walks past her. Toni hits some hip attacks but walks into the Rear View as Billie can't believe how badly this has gone so far. Baszler gets rid of Shotzi and Jillian Hall, with the song, is in at #8. Billie proposes a team of Billie and Jillie...and Hall actually goes for it, with Billie finally getting in the ring. There's a double suplex to Naomi and it's Ruby Riott in at #9.

Riott strikes away at Storm but gets caught with a German suplex. Kay saves Riott for some reason and now Jillian agrees to help them as well, though Riott doesn't seem interested. Victoria is another surprise return at #10, giving us Bayley, Naomi, Belair, Kay, Baszler, Storm, Hall, Riott and Victoria for a rather full ring.

Peyton Royce is in at #11 but Billie isn't sure if she should do the IIconics pose with Peyton or keep teaming with Riott. Victoria gets annoyed at Peyton for doing something like the Widow's Peak and shows her how it's done. Santana Garrett from NXT is in at #12 and some eliminations are teased with no one going out. Again. Liv Morgan is in at #13 and it's Oblivion to Bayley.

The Riott Squad gets together until Jillian kicks them down, only to turn on Victoria as well. Billie kicks Jillian out and screams about it so the Squad gets rid of her as well. Rhea Ripley is in at #14 and now we should clear out some of these people. House is cleaned with a series of kicks to the face and Storm is out in a hurry. Victoria grabs a Tarantula on Shayna and with that broken up, the Kirifuda Clutch is good

for the fast elimination. Some kicks to the face get rid of Garrett and it's Charlotte in at #15, though she's walking rather slowly.

House is cleaned in a hurry, with Charlotte knocking Ripley down twice and getting in a pair of nips. Bayley and Riott are knocked outside, but only Riott is eliminated as Bayley went through the ropes. Dana Brooke is in at #16 and goes up top for a flip dive onto a bunch of people. Liv's handspring headscissors is a bad idea as Peyton kicks her out and it's Torrie Wilson in at #17 (allowing commentary to continue the myth that she was ever anything serious).

Ripley is sent to the apron so Brooke charges, only to get powerbombed onto the apron for the elimination as Ripley seemed like she barely held on. Ric Flair introduces Lacey Evans, in a copy of Charlotte's robe, who is in at #18. The match basically stops so Charlotte can stare at Lacey and then beat the fire out of her. They fight to the floor (neither is eliminated) and the ring is full of feathers from the robe. Charlotte gets back on the apron and pulls Royce out, followed by Shayna getting rid of Torrie and Belair dumping Bayley.

Mickie James, billed as a legend, is in at #19 and the staredown with Charlotte is on in a hurry. They slug it out for a bit until Mickie manages a hurricanrana out of the corner to drop Charlotte. With no one being eliminated, Nikki Cross is in at #20, giving us Naomi, Belair, Baszler, Ripley, Charlotte, Evans, James and Cross.

It's Cross getting to clean house and Alicia Fox of all people is in at #21. Hold on though as here's R-Truth to try and enter the match, with the gang of morons following. Actually Fox pins him to win the title but it's Mandy Rose in at #22. Fox is tossed and Truth gets the title back, meaning the chase is on again. NXT's Dakota Kai is in at #23 and hits a bunch of clothesline. Lacey punches James out but Belair can't get rid of Naomi. Carmella is in at #24, with Reginald giving her

water and the required mirror.

Ripley drops Kai HARD onto the apron for the eliminations (referees are right there to check on her) and then gets rid of Mandy as a bonus. Cross tries to toss Carmella but Reginald makes the save, allowing Carmella to toss Cross instead. Tamina is in st #25 and superkicks Reginald, who was saving Carmella, meaning it's another elimination.

Tamina and Ripley have a staredown, with Tom Phillips lying to us by calling it "interesting". Belair knocks Naomi to the floor but she lands on her back, meaning the feet never touched. Naomi grabs Belair by the hair and uses it like a rope to pull herself back in (with Belair hanging onto the bottom rope by her feet).

They're both back in and it's Lana in at #26. She can't get rid of Ripley and things settle back down in a hurry. Alexa Bliss is in at #27 and gets to clean house for a bit but everyone jumps her...and the lights go out because she starts becoming the Fiend....but Ripley tosses her anyway. Well at least it fixed the lights. Ember Moon is in at #28 and it's a not great Eclipse to Baszler. A double middle rope Codebreaker hits Charlotte and Tamina and Nia Jax is in at #29.

Baszler kicks Lacey out and Jax gets rid of Moon to clear the ring a bit. Jax and Baszler get rid of Naomi but Jax sides with Tamina (family) over Baszler. Tamina superkicks Jax though, with Baszler making the save to get rid of Tamina in a hurry. Baszler and Jax slug it out until Ripley breaks it up, only to have Jax toss Baszler. Lana jumps on Jax's back, followed by a low bridge to get rid of Jax. Natalya is in at #30 to complete the field, giving us Belair, Charlotte, Lana, Belair and Natalya, but Jax and Baszler jump Natalya in the aisle.

Jax and Baszler beat up everyone else and then throw Natalya inside, with everyone down. We get another reunion between

Natalya and Lana, with the former turning on her again for the elimination. Natalya gets Ripley to the apron but Belair dumps Natalya to get us down to three. Charlotte smiles at Ripley and Belair and it's time for the three way staredown.

Charlotte goes after both of them and manages a suplex on Belair. A missed big boot puts Charlotte on the apron though and a pair of forearms gets us down to Ripley vs. Belair.

They're both on the apron in a hurry and wind up sitting down for the staredown. They agree to get back in and it's Belair driving in shoulders in the corner. Ripley is knocked to the apron again but she slides through Belair's legs and a double hair takedown gives them a breather. Back up and they slug it out with the Glam Slam and Riptide being countered. The KOD is broken up as well but Belair ducks a shot and clotheslines Ripley out to win at 58:55.

Rating: B-. The ending is what mattered here as you had two young, mostly unproven stars fighting for the big win and Belair pulled it off. That's what the point of the Royal Rumble is all about and it worked here. The rest of the match was pretty good but not great, with a few too many goofy/legendary (ok that might be a stretch) entrants and turning on each other spots, but that's minor by comparison. Belair winning is the right call in a match where they could have gone a lot of different ways.

Post match Belair is in tears as she dedicates the win to her parents. How in the world is she better as a face?

Miz and John Morrison talk to Bad Bunny but get scared off by Booker T.

The Kickoff Show panel talk about the women's Rumble and the Kickoff Show title change. Cue R-Truth, who is distracted by a possible John Cena sighting. Peter Rosenberg hits him low and steals the 24/7 Title.

We recap Roman Reigns vs. Kevin Owens for Reigns' Universal

Title. Owens has had Reigns beaten twice but Reigns has cheated to retain the title. The key is that Owens won't stay down, so tonight it's a Last Man Standing match. WWE official Adam Pearce was involved as well, as he was #1 contender but handed it to Owens to mess with Reigns.

Smackdown World Title: Roman Reigns vs. Kevin Owens

Owens is challenging and it's Last Man Standing. Reigns starts fast with a Superman Punch for four but Owens is right back with the Pop Up Powerbomb for the same. They head outside with Owens being sent into the steps and getting caught with a spear for nowhere near ten. That means Reigns can start hammering him with the steps as they head off to the area near the stage.

Owens manages to get in a shot to the face though and the shot with the steps puts Reigns on a table. A missed chair shot lets Reigns get in another right hand and they fight into the area around the fan screens. They head up another level and Owens gets in a few chair shots to the knees. Reigns is back with some chair shots of his own but gets caught by a Stunner. That's fine with Reigns, who gets in a shot to the face and throws Owens off the stands and through the tables.

Owens is up at nine and stumbles backstage...where Reigns runs him over with a golf cart (strike up the AEW fans). Reigns makes the mistake of saying that Owens' grandfathers aren't happy with Owens, sending Owens into a rage. The Pop Up Powerbomb puts Reigns onto a table and a frog splash drives him through it for the crash. Reigns makes it up again so Owens hits him in the face with a ladder. Owens puts him on a table and then raises a forklift to give him something to use for a Swanton (good thing there was a camera above the forklift for a good angle).

Somehow Reigns beats the count at nine but is down at ten, which is good enough to keep things going. They head back into

the arena with Reigns almost begging off but managing a spear through the set. That's only good for nine as Owens rolls off the stage, with Reigns looking rather frustrated. Reigns says he can't quit because he can't go home if he does, and pulls out some handcuffs.

Owens manages another Stunner and handcuffs Reigns to the set, where Reigns can't get to his feet. The referee gets to nine so Reigns sends him face first into the set, allowing Paul Heyman to come up and unlock the cuffs. Actually hang on as it takes so long that the referee spontaneously stops counting. Reigns finally gets out and guillotine chokes Owens out for the win at 24:54.

Rating: B-. Oh man that ending destroyed everything they had going on as Heyman took probably over a minute to unhook those handcuffs. As usual, this was like watching a hardcore match where your video kept buffering as they would do a spot, then stop, then do a spot, then stop. Reigns winning was the right call and there were some good spots, but the ending hurt it and there was a lot of stalling again.

Men's Royal Rumble

90 second intervals and Edge is in at #1 and Randy Orton is in at #2. They waste no time in brawling to the floor, with both guys ramming the other into the announcers' table. Sami Zayn is in at #3 and they fight inside, with Edge getting double teamed. Mustafa Ali is in at #4 and goes after Edge because he doesn't like Hall of Famers and legends coming in and taking his spot. Fair enough actually.

Jeff Hardy is in at #5 but Orton starts snapping off RK0's. Edge hits a spear to Orton though and they head outside with Edge hammering away again. Dolph Ziggler is in at #6 as Edge hits an Impaler onto the announcers' table Orton is busted open as Edge chairs him in the knee. Ziggler eliminates Hardy as referees come out to pull Edge off of Orton. Shinsuke

Nakamura is in at #7 as Orton is slowly carried to the back.

It's Carlito in at #8 as the first surprise return so we can get a battle of the apple with Nakamura. Xavier Woods is in at #9 and goes right after Ali but gets jumped by Zayn. Big E. is in at #10, giving us Edge, Orton (out but not eliminated), Zayn, Ali, Ziggler, Nakamura, Carlito, Woods and Big E.

New Day gets together to clean some house as John Morrison is in at #11. Big E. gets rid of Zayn and Ali dumps Woods but gets tossed out by Big E. to clear the ring a bit. Ricochet is in at #12 and gets to pick up the pace a lot. Edge can't keep up with Ricochet and it's Elias in at #13 to clean house, with Graves not being pleased. A jumping knee catches Carlito and Elias tosses him out.

Nakamura suplexes Ziggler and it's Damian Priest in at #14. The Reckoning hits Elias and some kicks to the face rock Morrison. Priest tosses Elias as we see Orton getting his knee treated. Edge and Priest slug it out but neither is out as Miz is in at #15. Hold on though as he needs to stop and destroy Bad Bunny's DJ setup. With that out of the way, it's the Skull Crushing Finale on Big E. Miz and Morrison start cleaning house but cue Bad Bunny, allowing Priest to toss the two of them. Bunny dives onto Miz and Morrison and it's Riddle in at #16.

A Nakamura vs. Riddle slugout gets the fans' attention but Priest breaks it up. Daniel Bryan is in at #17 and strikes away with little avail. Kane (looking like he's just done with this stuff) is in at #18 and gets rid of Ziggler and Ricochet. We get a Team H*** NO reunion but Kane drops Bryan in a hurry. Priest and Kane have a showdown with Priest escaping the chokeslam and striking away.

Kane is tossed to give Priest his badge of honor and it's King Corbin in at #19. Nakamura kicks him in the face as commentary talks about Giant Gonzalez. Corbin gives Nakamura Deep Six and

tosses him out. Otis is in at #20, giving us Edge, Orton (in the back), Big E., Priest, Riddle, Bryan, Corbin and Otis for a big field. The Caterpillar connects but Corbin tosses Otis in a hurry.

Dominick Mysterio is in at #21 and is taken down by Corbin in a hurry. That doesn't last long though as Dominick gets up and tosses Corbin, sending Cole through the roof. Riddle and Priest slug it out as Bobby Lashley is in at #22. Lashley sends Dominick flying out and clotheslines Priest out as well. Big E. and Lashley slug it out as I'm much more intrigued than I would have expected. Lashley gets powered up and has no idea what to do with Big E., who wants him to bring it. That's broken up and it's Hurricane in at #23.

The double chokeslam to Big E. and Lashley doesn't work (Graves: "There's a difference between being delusional and having a death wish.") and Hurricane is out in a hurry. In your big surprise, Christian of all people is in at #24 (Edge is stunned but then smiles) and helps low bridge Lashley out. Christian hits the Unprettier on Big E. (remember: he was #1 contender to the Intercontinental Title when he retired) and we get the big (and rather emotional) reunion with Edge. Riddle tries to interfere and gets taken down in a hurry, setting up Edge's assisted splash.

AJ Styles, with Omos, is in at #25 and Peles Christian (dang that's nice to be able to say) in a hurry. The spear drops AJ and it's Rey Mysterio (with a beer themed mask as WWE is now endorsing the product, meaning Cole gets in a commercial) in at #26. Omos saves AJ from getting eliminated and then pulls Big E. out. Big E. gets knocked over the announcers' table and it's Christian vs. Bryan against the ropes. Sheamus is in at #27 and gives Edge the ten forearms to the chest.

Omos breaks up a 619 to AJ and pulls Rey (with his stupid beer mask, including logo) out for an elimination. Cesaro is in at #28 and Swings Sheamus (Sheamus: "WHAT ARE YOU DOING???"),

followed by one to Bryan as well. Seth Rollins makes his big return at #29 and slugs it out with Cesaro. It's Braun Strowman in at #30, giving us a final group of Edge, Orton (still not eliminated), Riddle, Bryan, Christian, Styles, Sheamus, Cesaro, Rollins and Strowman.

It's time to clean some house as Strowman gets rid of Cesaro, Sheamus and Styles in a hurry. Edge and Christian spear Strowman down as Rollins is on the floor without being eliminated. Bryan and Riddle strike it out but Edge takes Riddle's place. The running knee has Edge in trouble but he hangs on to avoid the elimination. There's a running dropkick to Christian and another one to Strowman in the corner. Riddle and Bryan fight again with Bryan being sent to the apron, only to come back in with a missile dropkick.

Rollins comes back in with a Stomp to Bryan and the elimination, setting up a showdown with Riddle. The Final Flash sends Rollins outside but Strowman gives Riddle a right hand. A Stomp on the apron gets rid of Riddle, so Rollins tells Strowman that they need to team up. Strowman throws Rollins down instead and runs over Edge and Christian. Edge gets to the apron and tries to leverage Strowman out so Christian comes over to help. Rollins dumps Edge and Christian and Edge tosses Rollins....so Orton can come back in with the RK0. Edge is right back up to toss Orton though and wins at 59:12.

Rating: B. The ending helped this one a lot as I wouldn't have bet on Edge winning the whole thing. It felt like a genuine surprise and the impossible dream of returning to the top of the mountain can be an incredible story. You can go a lot of ways with that and it was nice to have the Orton "surprise" run in not work for him. Hopefully they don't do another Edge vs. Orton match, but they can burn it off at Fastlane or Elimination Chamber if they have to.

As for the rest of the match, thank goodness they had

Christian for a genuine surprise because it was lacking pretty hard otherwise. There were some good moments but a lot of it felt like going through the motions. The limited surprises they had were just ok, save for Christian who actually shocked me. Overall it's a pretty strong Rumble, but the Edge and Christian focus made up a good chunk of the positives.

A .7 Rousey sign pointing ends the show.

Overall Rating: B. This was a weird one as the Rumbles are both good and I was happy with the winners, but I wasn't wild on the majority of the Rumble matches. The rest of the card was the usual hit or miss show, but overall this show, like every Royal Rumble, is going to be judged based on the Rumble finishes. Those worked well here and they have a direction for Wrestlemania, though they have a lot of other questions left to answer on the way there.

Results

Drew McIntyre b. Goldberg – Claymore

Sasha Banks b. Carmella – Bank Statement

Bianca Belair won the women's Royal Rumble last eliminating Rhea Ripley

Roman Reigns b. Kevin Owens – Owens could not answer the ten count

Edge won the men's Royal Rumble last eliminating Randy Orton

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Royal Rumble 2021 Preview

It's time for one of the biggest events of the year and that is a great thing to see. While it is going to be weird to see the Royal Rumble with no fans in attendance, it should be interesting to see how they put things forward. This is a year where the matches are kind of wide open and that is a nice feeling to have. It's cool to see where WWE is going to go for Wrestlemania and we will learn a lot more about this by the end of the show. Let's get to it.

Universal Title: Roman Reigns(c) vs. Kevin Owens

This is one of the more fascinating stories in WWE at the moment and while that is the case for several reasons, the most impressive is that despite Owens not having any real chance of winning, you could believe that there is at least a chance of him pulling it off. Owens has more than lived up to the hype but he is facing a monster in Reigns. I think I know how the result is going to go, but I want to see how they get there and that is a great feeling.

I'll take Reigns to win in what should be the obvious ending, but at least they should be having a heck of a match on the way there. I want to see how they manage to have Reigns keep Owens down and while I could see it involving the return of Jimmy Uso or someone in Owens' family being threatened, it could be a heck of a way to make something work. Despite it being the end of the feud, I want to see where it goes and that's how things are supposed to be.

Women's Tag Team Titles: Asuka/Charlotte(c) vs. Nia Jax/Shayna Baszler

I don't remember the last time I saw a title reign this worthless and there is no reason to keep the titles on Charlotte and Asuka. They don't act like a team, they don't talk like a team and there is no need for them to be a team. They were thrown together and given the titles because Charlotte needed another title and that isn't enough of a reason for the title reign to continue.

That being said, I'm only hoping that Jax and Baszler get the belts back here, as you never can tell with WWE when it comes to Charlotte and titles. Both Charlotte and Asuka have seemed to move on, but I'm almost scared to see how WWE might get the titles off of them. This is not something I'm looking forward to seeing and hopefully they keep it short while getting Charlotte and Asuka far away from the titles, as they always should have been.

Smackdown Women's Title: Sasha Banks(c) vs. Carmella

Now this one has me confused and that's a good thing...I think. We've already seen this match a few times and Carmella's assistant is the one who is getting the most attention. Banks is still relatively early in her title reign (at least compared to what Bayley did with the title) so it would be a little strange to see her drop the title. That being said, this is the third title match between the two of them and I'm not sure I can see Carmella losing again.

I'll take Banks retaining here, but I'm a lot less sure about it than I probably should be. Banks is someone who feels like the top star of the division while Carmella feels like the challenger of the month to keep Banks busy until we get to someone serious (like Bianca Belair). This should be Banks, but I kind of like the fact that I'm not sure how accurate that is.

Women's Royal Rumble

I have no idea who is winning this. There are currently thirteen entrants announced and there are at least three people out of those thirteen who could win the thing. That's not even including some of the more marginal names who very well could pull it off. There are a few people who stand out above the rest, but narrowing that down is one of the trickiest things to pull off.

I'm likely to be wrong but I'll take Bianca Belair here. The Smackdown women's division needs some fresh blood and she will do as well as anyone else at the moment. The Raw side is a lot more complicated as you have a host of people capable of challenging Charlotte, but it would seem like Alexa Bliss is the right choice at the moment. However, she doesn't feel like the right choice to win the Rumble and then wait two and a half months to get the title shot. Bliss winning the title on Raw or at the Elimination Chamber and then dropping it to someone (say a certain Rhea Ripley) at Wrestlemania makes more sense, but Belair wins here.

Men's Royal Rumble

There are twenty one entrants for this match and the betting favorite seems to be Daniel Bryan. That would certainly make the most sense, but I'm not sure if it is going to be that easy. If nothing else, it would make sense to have someone on Raw pick up the win to immediately set them up against Drew McIntyre, who doesn't exactly have a clear opponent at Wrestlemania. That leaves you with a ton of options, and that makes things interesting.

But yeah I'll take Bryan to win. As much as I think there might be someone else who makes sense, I'm not sure I can figure out who that other person is. Bryan winning is a perfectly safe bet and setting him up to face Reigns at Wrestlemania is one of the easiest ideas that WWE could use.

This very well may be someone else, but I'll take Bryan out of the announced field.

Raw World Title: Drew McIntyre(c) vs. Goldberg

And we have this to wrap things up, as WWE has to scare us with the idea of Goldberg winning another World Title. McIntyre has already held the title for a long time and might be ready to move down just a hair, but my goodness not Goldberg again. I grew up in his heyday and I cannot bring myself to care about another reign out of him. WWE certainly thinks a lot of him though and that puts us in this dangerous situation.

I'm going to hold onto some hope here and say McIntyre wins as I hope WWE comes to their senses. There is little to no reason for Goldberg to get the title but that has never stopped them before. Please just go with what makes sense and let McIntyre have a big title match at Wrestlemania in front of thousands of fans like he deserves. Goldberg has a place in modern WWE, but it isn't winning the WWE Title in the main event of the Royal Rumble.

Overall Thoughts

I know it might not be the biggest and most best built show, but there is something special about the Royal Rumble. If nothing else, it is great to see who might be brought into the matches because WWE can get in some nice surprises. The Royal Rumble is a good show most of the time and if nothing else it is going to be an awesome to hear that buzzer all over again. Now just please don't screw it up.

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Royal Rumble Count-Up – 2019 (2020 Redo): The Man And The Man's Man

Royal Rumble 2019

Date: January 27, 2019

Location: Chase Field, Phoenix, Arizona

Attendance: 48,193

Commentators: Michael Cole, Corey Graves, Renee Young, Byron Saxton, Tom Phillips

It's time to go back to the stadium with another major show. The Royal Rumble has changed a good bit in recent years as it is now another extended show with a pair of Royal Rumble matches instead of just one. No one is exactly jumping off the page as a favorite in either of them, though Becky Lynch is currently the most popular person in the company. Let's get to it.

Kickoff Show: Bobby Roode/Chad Gable vs. Scott Dawson/Rezar

Non-title but if Dawson and Rezar (regular partners injured) win, the regular teams get a title shot each. And yes, this match was completely necessary as a last minute addition. The match is so awesome that a

cameraman falls down during Roode and Gable's entrance for the always fun camera shot. Drake Maverick is with Dawson and Rezar. Dawson's headlock on Roode doesn't get very far as Roode takes him into the corner for a monkey flip from Gable. Wilder wouldn't have let that happen.

An exchange of near falls doesn't go very far so Gable hits a springboard spinning crossbody for two. Dawson takes him down though and catapults Gable into a chokeslam to put the champs in trouble. Rezar chokes on the rope and Dawson grabs a northern lights suplex for two. The chinlock doesn't last long as it's back to Rezar to keep knocking Gable around.

Dawson sends him into the ropes but they bang heads for a double knockdown. Rezar comes back in and tries another chokeslam but Gable reverses into an armbar over the ropes. That's enough for the hot tag off to Roode, who hits a spinebuster on Dawson. Back up and Dawson dropkicks Rezar by mistake, leaving Roode to take a neckbreaker/moonsault combination for the pin at 6:55.

Rating: D+. This would be a textbook definition of a match that did not need to be added to the show and did nothing more than fill in time. As usual, that's not a good idea and yet it keeps happening around here almost every show. I'm not sure how much of a point there was to having the makeshift tag team thrown out there to lose when Akam wasn't going to be back for months. Nothing good here and a match that didn't need to happen.

Kickoff Show: United States Title: Shinsuke Nakamura vs. Rusev

Nakamura is challenging and Lana is here with Rusev. Nakamura gets driven into the corner for some shoulders to the ribs and a suplex brings him right back out. They head outside but Nakamura gets in a running kick to the face off the steps, setting up the running knee to the jaw. Back in and Bad Vibrations into the running knee to the ribs gets two and we hit the front facelock. Rusev fights up and punches away, setting up the spinwheel kick for two.

A suicide dive is blocked with a kick to the head so Rusev knocks him over again. Nakamura kicks him in the head again so Rusev scores with the Machka Kick and a swinging release Rock Bottom. Since Rusev stops for

half a second though, Rusev pulls him into a triangle choke, which is countered with a suplex. That works so well that Rusev loads up a superplex, only to get reversed into a Landslide for two. Nakamura goes for the turnbuckle pad but Lana gets on the apron (and grabs her ankle) to point it out. That just results in Rusev knocking her down by mistake, setting up Kinshasa for the pin and the title at 10;15.

Rating: C-. Just a little better than the opener but not all that much. Nakamura taking the title from Rusev just over a month into the title reign doesn't exactly mean much, but that's the case with so many of the midcard title changes around here. The match was a watchable enough power exchange but it still feels like a title change for the sake of a title change.

Kickoff Show: Cruiserweight Title: Hideo Itami vs. Kalisto vs. Akira Tozawa vs. Buddy Murphy

Murphy is defending, one fall to a finish, and Ariya Daivari is here with Itami. They circle each other for a bit until Itami rolls to the floor. That leaves the other three to trade rollups for two each until Murphy hits a tilt-a-whirl backbreaker to drop Tozawa. Kalisto's very springboardy hurricanrana is broken up as everything breaks down again. Kalisto tries a Cannonball off the apron but gets caught in Murphy's suplex instead.

Itami gets back in and poses, meaning it's time for the showdown with Murphy. The champ gets struck down in the corner and Itami demands respect as we can see his future going down the drain in a hurry. Murphy goes outside and tries to powerbomb Kalisto into the barricade, only to have Tozawa hit a suicide dive into Kalisto, which sends Murphy into the barricade for a crash. Itami throws Kalisto and Tozawa back inside so he can get two on each of them.

A Murphy distraction lets Kalisto kick Itami in the head and it's a monkey flip to send Tozawa onto Murphy on the floor. Murphy comes back in and gets missile dropkicked by Tozawa, only to have Itami break up the top rope backsplash. Itami gets knocked to the outside though and Tozawa hits a suicide headbutt. Kalisto and Murphy follow with dives of their

own with the champ getting the best of it.

Back in and Kalisto hits a hurricanrana driver for two on Murphy, who is right back up with a Liger Bomb for his own near fall. Tozawa scores with a reverse hurricanrana on Murphy but it's Itami breaking that up. The Salida Del Sol gets two on Itami and everyone is down. A series of kicks puts everyone down again for a bit so Murphy knees Kalisto and Tozawa. Murphy slips out of whatever Itami's spinning knee deal was (I STILL don't get that one) and knees him down as well, setting up Murphy's Law to retain at 12:06.

Rating: B-. Now that's more like it with an action packed twelve minute match that actually felt like it mattered for a change. Or at least it felt like a match that had been set up more than thirty seconds before they came to the ring. Murphy continues to look like a star and it's easy to see why he's a much bigger deal just a year later.

The opening video looks at how important the Rumble is, with some great historical footage included. It has more history than any show not named Wrestlemania so it's a smart move to go into that well. This switches into your regular opening video, which does its usual good job at looking at the rest of the card.

Smackdown Women's Title: Becky Lynch vs. Asuka

Asuka is defending after taking the title from Becky in a TLC match at TLC, with Charlotte being included as well. Becky is on fire at this point and it's a matter of time before she gets the big hero moment. They go with the aggressive lockup to start and that goes absolutely nowhere. Becky's running shoulder earns her a running dropkick and a lot of shouting from the champ. Neither of them can get the arm so Asuka kicks her in the leg for two instead.

Becky is right back up with shots to the face and a kick to the ribs, followed by a running clothesline to sent Asuka to the floor. They switches places and you just don't do that to Asuka, who scores with the running hip attack. Asuka heads outside as well and gets sent into the apron, only to send Becky into the post. The Bexploder sends Asuka into the barricade though and Becky is starting to seethe.

That means the aggressive stomping in the corner and the next of what is likely to be a bunch of armbars. That's broken up so Becky avoids another hip attack and hammers away in the ropes. Asuka isn't about to get beaten up though and pulls Becky into the Asuka Lock while still in the ropes. With that broken up, Becky fights out of the corner and grabs a Disarm-Her in the corner. That doesn't last long either so Asuka knees her out of the air. Asuka strikes away but misses a missile dropkick so Becky can hit a Rock Bottom for two.

Back up again and they fight to the apron with Asuka hitting a fisherman's neckbreaker to the floor and they're both down. Asuka is in first and Becky beats the count, earning herself a basement dropkick to the head. They slug it out until Asuka kicks her head off for two. Asuka goes up so Becky stops her with a kick of her own and a super Bexploder gets a rather near fall as the crowd is staying right with them.

The middle rope legdrop misses though and Asuka catches her in a Disarm-Her. To keep up the same line of thinking, Becky gets her own Asuka Lock before switching to the Disarm-Her. Becky is too weak to get it on in full so Asuka rolls out and grabs the Asuka Lock and flips forward Cattle Mutilation style for the tag at 17:09.

Rating: B+. These two beat the heck out of each other and that finisher was the mega death version of the Asuka Lock. It's really weird to see Becky lose though and it was even more surprising watching this live as Becky was the hottest thing around. Having her tap is a bit much, but sweet goodness would they get mileage out of that loss. The counters and different styles were awesome here though and it's a near instant classic.

Smackdown Tag Team Titles: Shane McMahon/The Miz vs. The Bar

The Bar is defending and Miz's dad is in the front row. Miz and Shane are together because of the Best In The World tournament but Shane has agreed to be nice to him so they can succeed together. In other words, expect the Shane Show to continue. Shane spears Sheamus down at the bell and it's time for an early breather. Miz comes in to roll Cesaro up for two but it's way too early for the Skull Crushing Finale.

Sheamus grabs Miz from behind to hold him in the corner though and Cesaro scores with the running uppercut. A right hand knocks Shane to the floor so Miz kicks away to avenge his fallen partner. They all head outside with Miz having to be saved from a double powerbomb through the announcers' table. It's too early for the big elbow through the table so Shane hits a top rope clothesline on Sheamus instead.

Shane gets sent hard into the barricade and that should let him stay down and use up all the oxygen in the first three rows. Back in and Sheamus drops a knee on Miz before cranking on the arm. The ten forearms to the chest and a double suplex back in get two as Shane is back up onto the apron. Cesaro drops a middle rope ax handle for two and Sheamus comes back in to talk more trash.

Miz sends Sheamus to the floor though and a backdrop puts Cesaro down as well. That's finally enough for the hot tag to Shane and it's bad punches a go-go. A DDT gets two on Sheamus and Shane loads up Coast To Coast to both of them at once. Cesaro pulls him out of the air and into the Swing though and it's a rather long one this time.

Since it was just a really long Swing, Shane is right back with a triangle choke. Sheamus makes a save and it's the spike White Noise for two, with no one making the save. Well you knew he was going to kick out of at least one finisher. Miz is back in to save Shane from the Brogue Kick, which hits Cesaro by mistake. The shooting star press finishes Cesaro for the titles at 13:23.

Rating: C. It's every complaint about a Shane match that you could find: he's pushed too hard, he looks ready to explode from hyperventilating after about eighteen seconds and he kicks out of a big finisher. Oh and now he's a champion, naturally getting the pin in the process. It had already gotten bad and it was only going to get worse from here.

Shane and Miz celebrate with Papa Mizanin as the announcers get to praise Shane a bit.

Cole announces the attendance and Meltzer has a correction out immediately.

We recap Ronda Rousey vs. Sasha Banks. Rousey wants to see Banks get fired up and is ready to show us the difference between a Boss and a champion. Sasha promised to prove how good she was and made Natalya tap in a tag match on Monday. Graves: "It's one thing to make Natalya submit." Nice little unintentional insult there.

Sasha isn't concerned about keeping her emotions in check. Tonight, she's proving that she's the best in the world.

Raw Women's Title: Sasha Banks vs. Ronda Rousey

Rousey is defending and goes straight for the armbar but Banks armdrags her right back down. A springboard armdrag doesn't work that well and Rousey mocks Banks' pose. Rousey tries her own Three Amigos but Banks blocks the third, only to have to go to the ropes to avoid an armbar. A kick to the ribs puts Banks on the floor but Rousey punches the post by mistake.

That lets Banks hit a suicide dive to put Rousey down for a change. The chinlock doesn't last long so Banks hits the running knees in the corner instead. Back up and Rousey hits a running elbow to the face for two so Banks hits a running knee of her own for the same. Rousey shrugs it off and loads up Piper's Pit but gets reversed into a nasty armbar, complete with some finger bending.

Banks switches over into the Bank Statement but it's broken up in a hurry. Now Piper's Pit can connect and Rousey armbars her over the ropes. Rousey goes up but gets superplexed right back down so Banks can go back to the armbar. You don't do that to Rousey, who rolls Banks over with some judo throws. They go outside with Rousey grabbing the armbar in full to make Banks tap.

Back in and Rousey hammers away in the corner but Banks gets in a shot of her own for the double knockdown. The armbar is broken up again and another Piper's Pit is countered into a crossbody. The Bank Statement goes on until Banks switches to a Fujiwara armbar. Rousey rolls out and gutwrench suplexes the heck out of her, setting up another Piper's Pit for the pin at 13:49.

Rating: B. This took time to get going but they were rolling at the end. Rousey was such a freak of nature as she probably hadn't had 25 matches by this point (certainly not 10 big ones) and was going back and forth with one of the best around on the big stage. The battle of the submissions attempts worked well here and I got way into this all over again.

Post match they do a left handed handshake since Banks' arm is wrecked. Banks does hold up the Horsewomen sign though because she isn't the nicest loser in the world.

We recap the Kickoff Show. We're so lucky.

John Cena has been injured and won't be participating in the Royal Rumble. He was totally and really here and everything though. Honest. Braun Strowman is replacing him.

Beth Phoenix joins commentary.

Women's Royal Rumble

90 second intervals and Lacey Evans (making her main roster in-ring debut, save for a random Main Event match) is in at #1, meaning she needs to introduce herself. Natalya is in at #2 and Lacey runs the ropes to start. Neither can hit a dropkick and Lacey can't quite do a nip up. A clothesline can't get rid of Natalya and she reverses a powerbomb with a hurricanrana. Natalya hits the discus lariat as Mandy Rose is in at #3, sending Graves over the edge all over again.

Another discus lariat drops Mandy and it's the double Sharpshooter, which Graves says is like the even more stuffed Oreos. Liv Morgan is in at #4 and is out in less than ten seconds. Lacey and Mandy start double teaming Natalya but Lacey sends Mandy into the corner for the double Bronco Buster. Mickie James is in at #5, giving us the first non-blonde. House is cleaned in a hurry until Mickie has to save herself from being tossed by Mandy. Ember Moon is in at #6 and gets to clean house as well. No one can eliminate anyone else and it's Billie Kay in at #7.

She's fine with staying on the floor though, saying she's going to wait

for Peyton Royce to go in. More non-eliminations continue and it's Nikki Cross in at #8 (Graves: "Batten down the hatches." I really need to find out what hatches are and what it means to batten something.). She runs over Billie at ringside and then dives onto everyone else inside. Mandy and Nikki have a weird showdown with Nikki getting the better of it. Billie is inside now and get beaten up as well because she isn't great on her own. Peyton Royce is in at #9 and it's IIconics time. The team beats down Nikki and it's time to fight on the ropes some more.

Tamina is in at #10, giving us Lacey, Natalya, Mandy, Mickie, Ember, Billie, Nikki Peyton and Tamina, meaning the ring is too full. Tamina gets to wreck people until Nikki gets to have another not that interesting staredown. A dropkick and tackle put Tamina through the ropes but she's right back in with a kick to Nikki's face. Mickie low bridges Tamina to the apron but she comes back in with the Superfly Splash to Nikki. A superkick gets rid of Mickie and it's Xia Li in at #11.

Li kicks away at a lot of people but gets knocked down by Tamina. Sarah Logan, in Braveheart paint, is in at #12 as the ring is full and the crowd is dead. Ember has to hang on by her feet but pulls herself back in (finally a reaction) and the IIconics get rid of Cross. Charlotte is in at #13 and PLEASE get rid of some people. She gets jumped on the way in but everyone is fought off in a hurry. Lacey eliminates both IIconics at once and Charlotte kicks Li out to finally clear the ring a bit. Charlotte and Tamina have a staredown (NO ONE CARES ABOUT TAMINA!!!) and Charlotte gets rocked by a superkick.

Kairi Sane is in at #14 and she runs to the ring while looking through a telescope because of course she does. Charlotte gets rid of Tamina as Sane dives in. Charlotte chops Sane down but she's right back up with the Insane Elbow to Logan. That's enough to get rid of Sarah and it's Maria Kanellis in at #15. She breaks up a staredown between Charlotte and Lacey, including a double bulldog. Charlotte is back up with a spear to Maria, who apparently doesn't belong in this ring.

Naomi is in at #16 and that wakes the crowd up a bit. Mandy sends Naomi to the apron but gets backdropped out, only to pull Naomi to the floor. The feet don't touch so Naomi backflips onto the barricade, tightrope

walks across, and does a crazy athletic jump from the barricade to the steps. And then Mandy pulls her off the steps for the elimination anyway in a great heel move. Charlotte kicks Lacey out and it's Candice LeRae in at #17. Candice Black Widows Ember but it's broken up in a hurry.

Natalya powerbombs Charlotte out of the corner and it's Alicia Fox in at #18 (I had almost forgotten about her.). Maria wants to be friends with Alicia so they beat up Sane. Alicia puts her captain's hat on Maria before stopping to dance. Maria throws it on the ground and stomps on it...sending Alicia into a fit. She's back up to eliminate Maria though as Kacy Catanzaro is in at #19 and starts with the hurricanranas. A slingshot version puts Alicia on the apron but she skins the cat to come back in.

Zelina Vega is in at #20, giving us Natalya, Moon, Charlotte, Sane, Candice, Alicia, Catanzaro and Vega. Candice and Vega slug it out as fallout from Andrade vs. Johnny Gargano but they slow down, meaning it's yet another lull. Ruby Riott is in at #21 and has Logan and Morgan with her so all three pull Charlotte to the floor for some triple teaming. Fox gets the same treatment and Vega rolls to the floor to hide underneath the ring.

Riott throws Fox back inside and then eliminates her, followed by a powerbomb into the barricade for LeRae and another elimination. Dana Brooke is in at #22 and hits a weird looking sitout powerbomb on Catanzaro. Now the Squad pulls Brooke to the floor (I really can't stand this whole people being on the floor but not eliminated deal as it makes things more confusing than they need to be) and Riott eliminates Sane. Io Shirai is in at #23 and dropkicks the Squad down, setting up the big moonsault to the floor (she was never in so it's not an elimination).

Shirai and Riott go over the top to the apron for a slugout but they both get back in. Rhea Ripley is in at #24 but the star power hasn't started for her just yet. She wrecks things a bit until Moon takes her down with a wheelbarrow faceplant. Brooke kicks Catanzaro to the floor but she holds her legs up, hand walks to the post, flips up to it and climbs back in to blow away Naomi's save. Ripley blocks Catanzaro's spinning DDT though and tosses her out for real.

Sonya Deville is in at #25 and spears Moon down but Brooke hits her with a shoulder. Brooke enziguris Ripley but gets sent to the apron and dropkicked out. Vega leans from under the ring to laugh at Brooke...and here's freaking Hornswoggle to chase Vega back inside. That doesn't last long as Ripley throws her out, with Hornswoggle chasing Vega to the back. Alexa Bliss is in at #26 to a MAJOR pop in her first match since September. The moonsault knees to the ribs hit Moon but Sonya pounds Bliss down in the corner. Bliss is right back by sending her to the apron though and a right hand gets rid of Sonya.

Bayley is in at lucky #27 and gets her own house cleaning segment, including a clothesline to get rid of Riott. That's not all though as she knocks Ripley out as well as Lana is in at #28. Well not in really as she can barely walk due to her ankle injury from earlier. The trainer comes out to check on her in the aisle as Shirai saves herself from an elimination. Lana is still being checked on as Nia Jax is in at #29, only to jump Lana in the aisle for a bonus.

Fit Finlay comes out to tell her to go to the ring and it's time for the giant to wreck some people. Shirai makes the mistake of trying a moonsault and gets knocked out in a hurry. Natalya somehow gets Jax up for a fireman's carry but can't do anything else with it and gets eliminated after 56 minutes. Carmella is in at #30 (an honor she won in Mixed Match Challenge), giving us a final group of Moon, Charlotte, Bliss, Bayley, Lana, Jax and Carmella, though Lana hasn't gotten anywhere near the ring.

Carmella gets in a dropkick on Moon but Jax runs her over. Hold on though as Lana is still down so here's Becky Lynch to say she wants the spot instead. Finlay says do it and the fans are WAY into this again. Becky gets the long awaited showdown with Jax but Charlotte breaks it up and sends Becky to the apron. That doesn't work either and it's Becky coming back in with a missile dropkick to Jax. Bliss goes after Moon and pulls her to the apron by the hair (freaking ow man) and then chokeslaves her out after a rather ridiculous 53 minutes.

Carmella hits a Bronco Buster on Bliss and there's a Buckle Bomb from Bayley. Carmella and Bayley team up to throw Bliss out so Jax

clotheslines them both. Charlotte saves Becky from Jax's facebreaker so Carmella gives Becky a Downward Spiral instead. For some reason Charlotte goes up top so Carmella tries a running headscissors, only to get sent to the apron.

That lasts all of two seconds but Charlotte puts her out there again and a big boot gets us down to four (Bayley, Jax, Charlotte and Becky). Bayley dropkicks Charlotte and Jax against the ropes but Jax is right back with a big boot to eliminate Bayley, leaving us with three. The three way showdown is on with Jax splashing both of them in the corner. That sends Becky to the floor (not out) and it's a Charlotte vs. Jax showdown that is a little more interesting than it sounds.

Something like a slow motion AA has Jax in trouble but Charlotte can't follow up. Charlotte gets her onto the apron and Becky pulls her out, leaving us with Charlotte vs. Becky in the rivalry that won't end. Hold on though as Jax shoves Becky off the steps and we have a knee injury. Referees check on her but Becky pulls herself back in for the fight. Well kind of at least as Becky falls straight back down as soon as she's inside.

Becky says it's her time and Charlotte has already taken enough from her. Charlotte, obviously, goes right after the knee but Becky kicks her in the face. She sends Charlotte to the apron but another kick to the leg cuts off the rally. Charlotte misses a charge though and a forearm sends Becky to Wrestlemania at 1:11:23.

Rating: D+. The Becky parts made it better but WOW this was badly laid out. There were far too many instances of people just standing around and doing nothing with several people staying in there too long. Ember for 52 minutes? Natalya for 56? Mandy Rose for nearly 26? You don't need everyone in there for that long and it's ok to come up with something other than "everyone stays on the ropes while two people do something in the middle" over and over. They got the right winner but it was a heck of a chore to get there.

Becky can barely stand but is very pleased with the results. The celebration goes on for a LONG time.

We recap AJ Styles vs. Daniel Bryan for the Smackdown World Title. Bryan turned heel to steal the title and became the crazy environmentalist so, after losing to Brock Lesnar at Survivor Series, it's time for a (second) rematch. AJ is out to show that he isn't complacent, which included attacking Vince McMahon in a story that went nowhere.

Smackdown World Title: AJ Styles vs. Daniel Bryan

AJ is challenging. We get the Big Match Intros and AJ hammers him down in the corner so the champ bails for a bit. Back in and they fight on the mat for a bit with AJ's wristlock not getting him very far. A headlock works a bit better as the first gear work continues. Bryan bails to the floor again but comes back in...to get punched in the face. An uppercut puts Styles in the corner and he gets dropped chest first onto the post to give Bryan a target.

Bryan starts in on the shoulder and cranks on a hammerlock on the mat with Styles having to use his foot to reach a rope. A cross armbreaker is broken up as well so Bryan punches him in the face to even the score. AJ scores with a dropkick and the pinfall reversal sequence gets some near falls each. Bryan tosses him hard into the corner and that means the running dropkick.

A dragon suplex has AJ (with his bloody nose) rocked again and Bryan kicks him off the top and out to the floor. Bryan goes out after him but it's the moonsault off the barricade into the perfect reverse DDT (that's one of the best he's ever hit). Back in and the springboard 450 hits Bryan's knees, meaning the LeBell Lock goes on. Not to be outdone, AJ escapes and reverses into the Calf Crusher to stay on the knee.

That's broken up as well and they're both down for a bit. Bryan gets up first and kicks away at the arm, setting up the big kick to the head for two. AJ catches him on top and they slug it out up there, with Styles backflipping out of a belly to back superplex. The Calf Crusher goes on again before AJ switches to a cradle for two instead. Neither can get a backslide so AJ grabs a brainbuster for two more.

The Phenomenal Forearm is broken up with a kick to the arm but AJ kicks him away. The bad arm means he can't use the regular springboard so he

tries another version, only to get kicked out of the air again. They're both down again...so here's Erick Rowan of all people. Bryan knocks the referee down by mistake though, allowing Rowan to come in with a claw slam to Styles so Bryan can retain at 24:33.

Rating: B+. I'm not wild on the ending but you can't have AJ lose a clean fall here. They were working a heck of a match here with both of them going with their own style and having the other broken down. I don't particularly care for Rowan interfering, but he and Bryan would wind up being a nice enough team so well done, even if it wasn't the best feeling at the time.

Post match Rowan holds AJ up for the running knee from Bryan so things can continue.

We recap Finn Balor vs. Brock Lesnar for the Raw World Title in a match hyped up as David vs. Goliath. Balor is small but can do extraordinary stuff so he wants to fight Lesnar. This isn't the Demon for reasons of Balor wanting to do it himself, even though the Demon IS Balor, meaning the whole thing doesn't make a lot of sense. Or they just don't want Lesnar losing because that wouldn't be very Lesnarish.

Raw World Title: Finn Balor vs. Brock Lesnar

Lesnar is defending and we get the Big Match Intros. Balor dropkicks him at the bell to start and another running dropkick sends him into the corner. The first belly to belly cuts him off in a hurry though and we settle down for the first time. Another belly to belly on the floor rocks Balor again and it's time to load up the announcers' table.

Balor sends him ribs first into the corner of said table though and he does it again for painful measure. Brock can barely stand up as he throws Balor back inside for the shoulders in the corner. Another belly to belly has Balor flying but Lesnar is wincing a bit. Lesnar gets in yet another suplex but this time Balor is up with a Sling Blade. That's it for the offense though as Lesnar BLASTS him with a clothesline.

Lesnar can't hit a German suplex though as the stomach gives out. The F5 is countered into a DDT and Balor gets smart by stomping at the ribs. The

big flip dive to the floor puts Lesnar down again and Balor hits a second for good measure. A third flip dive takes Lesnar down again but Renee says we're having a new champion to end Balor's hopes. Back in and Balor kicks him in the face, setting up the Coup de Grace for two, with Lesnar spinning into the Kimura on the kickout, making Balor tap at 8:36.

Rating: C+. Well that was short. They had some moments in there but at the same time, Lesnar wasn't exactly doing much for the first half of the match. It got better once he was selling but there are only so many things you can do in less than nine minutes. The stuff with Lesnar's stomach being messed up was enough to go somewhere, but this was only so good.

Post match Lesnar beats Balor up a few more times. This is something else that went nowhere.

Jerry Lawler and JBL join commentary.

Men's Royal Rumble

90 second intervals again and Elias is in at #1, meaning it's time for a song. Well make that insulting Phoenix until he's interrupted by Jeff Jarrett of all people at #2. Jeff gets to strut and say ain't I great as Elias is rather pleased by being interrupted by someone who brings something to the table. For now though, they need to sing together. And yes, they really are doing this three hours and forty minutes into a show with an hour long match to go. Jeff goes to spell his name so Elias hits him in the face to get things going.

Elias hammers away on the ropes and hits a clothesline so he can get in another catchphrase. A guitar shot to the back is enough to get rid of Jeff. Shinsuke Nakamura, last year's winner, is in at #3 and he wastes no time in kicking Elias down. For some reason Elias goes up top for Old School, though it's just an armdrag instead of a shot to the back. Kurt Angle is in at #4 to a big reaction and he starts in with the suplexes. Elias gets him in the corner though and it's Big E. in at #5, with his gear including Kofi's best Rumble moments. That's rather cool....I think.

The Warrior Splash hits Nakamura but an Angle Slam takes Big E. down.

Nakamura is back up with the running knee to Angle's ribs and another running knee gets rid of Kurt. Honestly, it's better to have him out that fast before he hurts himself again. Johnny Gargano is in at #6 and gets to clean house on Nakamura and Big E. The slingshot spear cuts Elias down and it's Jinder Mahal in at #7. After he knocks everyone down, Gargano knocks Mahal out in about thirty seconds. The Singh Brothers get beaten up for a bonus and now it's back to something that actually matters.

Samoa Joe is in at #8, just as Nakamura is surrounded in the corner. Elias gets kicked down and Joe just walks away from Gargano's middle rope dive (that will always be cool). Joe dumps Big E. and it's Curt Hawkins in at #9, still in the middle of his horrible losing streak. Hawkins gets in a few shots but bails to the floor in what is probably a smart move. The fans get behind Hawkins, even as Joe grabs him in the Koquina Clutch. For some reason Elias breaks that up and Hawkins bails to the floor again, this time hiding underneath the ring.

Seth Rollins is in at #10, giving us Elias, Nakamura, Gargano, Samoa Joe, Hawkins and Rollins. The springboard clotheslines hits Elias and there's the Falcon Arrow to Gargano. Elias gets sent to the apron and then into the post for the elimination. It's Titus O'Neil in at #11 and he crosses himself before charging to the ring, only to stop himself before getting to the apron in a funny moment. Titus sees Hawkins hiding underneath the ring and chases him inside, only to be eliminated almost immediately. Joe throws Hawkins out a second later to end the harmless comedy segment.

With the ring a little more cleared out, Kofi Kingston is in at #12 and things settle down a bit. As everyone fights by the ropes, Mustafa Ali is in at #13. Joe is waiting on him so Ali scores with a dropkick, only to get grabbed by Nakamura. That's fine with Ali, who slips over the back and tells Nakamura to COME ON. Nakamura does just that and gets tossed out by Ali in quite the upset. Ali isn't done either as he hits a tornado DDT on Gargano, only to get planted by Joe. Dean Ambrose, still in his pretty disastrous heel run, is in at #14 and goes right at it with Rollins, as expected.

With that broken up, Dean sends Kofi over the top but Kofi keeps one foot off the ground and rolls over to the steps to save himself. That's not as

good as his others, but maybe he's crashing underneath the expectations. Kingston comes back in with a DDT to Dean, who is right back up to get rid of Gargano. No Way Jose, with the Conga Line, is in at #15 and Joe literally eliminates him in two seconds. No worries though as he and the Conga Line dance to the back as that was quite the use of an entrance.

Drew McIntyre is in at #16 and headbutts Jose for dancing too close to him. After cleaning some house, Joe and McIntyre slug it out for the hoss fight. The Claymore drops Joe and there's one for Rollins as well as Xavier Woods is in at #17. As he is coming in, Kofi is knocked off the apron but sunset flips Woods, allowing him to keep one foot up.

Woods stands up with Kofi on his back (Cole to JBL: "I remember when you and Ron used to do this.") and walks over to the steps for the real save of the year. Then McIntyre eliminates Woods and Kingston a second later because this show doesn't like fun to last too long (completely appropriate for McIntyre of course). Pete Dunne is in at #18 and that gets a nice reaction. Dunne goes after Joe and Graves is rather pleased with everything going on at the moment.

Ali hangs on after being thrown to the apron and it's Andrade in at #19. Andrade goes after Dunne in a match that sounds rather interesting indeed. With no one close to an elimination, Apollo Crews is in at #20, giving us Joe, Rollins, Ali, Ambrose, McIntyre, Dunne, Andrew and Apollo. McIntyre is sent to the apron and it's Aleister Black (without the riser) in at #21. He goes right after Dunne in another match that sounds awesome (it's almost like Dunne is great or something) but switches to Ambrose, with Black Mass connecting for the elimination.

Shelton Benjamin is in at #22 and goes at it with Crews for the athletic freak off. Crews saves himself from being eliminated as Shelton gets Koquina Clutched. That's broken up and Ali dumps Joe in an upset. Baron Corbin is in at #23, fresh from his shift at *insert restaurant joke of the day here*. Deep Six drops Ali but he hangs onto the rope so Corbin knocks out Crews instead. Black and McIntyre slug it out and it's Jeff Hardy in at #24 to keep the talent field high.

The Twisting Stunner hits Shelton and the Whisper in the Wind hits

several people at the same time. Dunne bends Black's fingers and Corbin tosses Black, followed by McIntyre doing the same to Dunne to clear some space. Rey Mysterio is in at #25 and charges into a chokebreaker from Corbin. With everyone fighting by the ropes, it's Intercontinental Champion Bobby Lashley in at #26...and Rollins eliminates him in about fifteen seconds. How many times do they need to do that in one match?

Lashley pulls Rollins, who low bridged him out, to the floor and beats the heck out of him to let off some steam. Rollins is spinebusted through the announcers' table and it's Braun Strowman in at lucky #27 for a possible (though unlikely) winner. Strowman knocks Corbin out in a hurry and there goes Benjamin a few seconds later. McIntyre dumps Hardy as Dolph Ziggler, his recent rival, is in at #28. That means a superkick to get rid of McIntyre and it's Randy Orton in at #29 for the slow walk to the ring.

Strowman is right there for the showdown and the RK0 is blocked in a hurry. Andrade loads up a superplex on Ali, so Strowman puts them BOTH on his shoulders with Mysterio diving off the top to take them down in your HOW CAN HE DO THAT spot of the match. R-Truth (also here because of the Mixed Match Challenge) is in at #30...but hang on as Nia Jax of all people jumps him from behind to take his spot, continuing the near trolling levels of a push. That gives us a final group of Rollins, Ali, Andrade, Orton, Strowman, Ziggler, Orton and Jax.

Nia gets to wreck some people and Ali is out in a hurry after a surprising thirty plus minutes. Orton stares Jax down but can't hit the surprise RK0 attempt, earning himself a shoulder down. Jax tells Rey to go for the 619 on Orton but cuts him off, only to get superkicked by Ziggler. The 619 hits Jax and Orton connects with the RK0, setting up a baseball slide from Mysterio to get rid of her.

Orton tosses Mysterio and Andrade dumps Orton, leaving us with Ziggler, Andrade, and Rollins and Strowman on the floor. Strowman comes back in and splashes Andrade and Ziggler in the corners to send them outside again. Hold on though as Strowman needs to go to the floor again to run Rollins over.

Everyone goes after Strowman in a 2004 flashback but he gets rid of Andrade and Ziggler. Rollins uses the momentum to put him on the apron but charges into a chokeslam. Back in and Rollins grabs a guillotine to pull Strowman to the apron and sends him into the post. A kick to the ribs sets up the Stomp on the apron to get rid of Strowman to give Rollins the win at 57:34.

Rating: B. This was much more like it with a nice mix of brawling, comedy, action and an only somewhat guaranteed winner. I know you can't really hide the fact that someone is a shoe in winner but it's nice to see them at least giving it a little bit more drama. Rollins winning made sense here as he had been on fire for the last year and needed something like this. Good Rumble, though there have been a lot better.

SIGN POINTING, yes I said SIGN POINTING, ends the show.

Overall Rating: B-. I'm curious to see how this one holds up against the original rating as the length was driving me crazy this time around. There is a lot of good stuff on here but EGADS it's a two hour Kickoff Show and then four hours and forty minutes of the main show. You really needed to have the weird Tag Team Title deal on the Kickoff Show and then put Miz and Shane on the main show? That, plus Bryan vs. Styles, could have been on a big Smackdown at worst and this show could have been trimmed down by 45 minutes.

The only bad thing on here is the women's Royal Rumble, but when that one match is nearly an hour and fifteen minutes long, it has quite the negative impact on the rest of the show. The men's match makes up for it and the card is much better than worse, but they really, really need to stop with these shows getting close to (or over in Wrestlemania's case) seven hours. It doesn't matter how good it is. If you're going three hours over the length of Wrestlemania X7, the time is going to cause a lot of problems. Anyway, good show, which could have been great with a big editing job.

Ratings Comparison

Chad Gable/Bobby Roode vs. Scott Dawson/Rezar

Original: D+

2020 Redo: D+

Shinsuke Nakamura vs. Rusev

Original: C

2020 Redo: C-

Buddy Murphy vs. Hideo Itami vs. Akira Tozawa vs. Kalisto

Original: C+

2020 Redo: B-

Asuka vs. Becky Lynch

Original: B+

2020 Redo: B+

The Bar vs. Shane McMahon/The Miz

Original: D

2020 Redo: C

Sasha Banks vs. Ronda Rousey

Original: B+

2020 Redo: B

Women's Royal Rumble

Original: B

2020 Redo: D+

AJ Styles vs. Daniel Bryan

Original: C-

2020 Redo: B+

Brock Lesnar vs. Finn Balor

Original: C+

2020 Redo: C+

Men's Royal Rumble

Original: D

2020 Redo: B

Overall Rating

Original: D+

2020 Redo: B-

WOW. I was actually shocked by the original ratings of those Rumbles and the Styles vs. Bryan match. I've mellowed a lot since then as the show really isn't that bad.

Here's the original review if you're interested:

<https://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2019/01/28/royal-rumble-2019-i-almost-had-a-birthday-watching-this-show/>

Remember to follow me on Twitter @kbreviews and head over to my Amazon author page with 30 different cheap wrestling books at:

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Royal Rumble Count-Up – 2019 (Original): It's Still Going Somewhere

Royal Rumble 2019

Date: January 27, 2019

Location: Chase Field, Phoenix, Arizona

Commentators: Michael Cole, Corey Graves, Renee Young, Byron Saxton, Tom Phillips

It's the first of the Big Four pay per views and that means it's time to really get going with the busiest season of the year. In this case that means a pair of Royal Rumble matches, which may or may not have the highest levels of drama. I'm not sure who we'll be seeing tonight, but it could be interesting. Let's get to it.

The stadium looks huge, though it doesn't look full.

Kickoff Show: Bobby Roode/Chad Gable vs. Rezar/Scott Dawson

THIS NEEDED TO BE ADDED TO THE SHOW??? If Rezar and Dawson win, both of their teams get future title shots. Akam is injured at the moment in case this is even more confusing than it seems. As a bonus, the cameraman falls over while trying to get a closeup of Roode during his entrance. Roode and Dawson start things off with Scott getting caught in a wristlock. It's back to Gable but Rezar comes in to hammer away with the heavy forearms.

With Gable properly beaten, Dawson comes in for a suplex, followed by a chinlock. That's rather old school of him. Back up and they slug it out until a shove into the ropes sends Gable head first into Dawson, meaning a double knockdown. Rezar comes in but gets caught in the armbreaker over the ropes. Everything breaks down and Dawson runs into Rezar by mistake,

setting up the moonsault/neckbreaker combination to finish Dawson at 6:55.

Rating: D+. Well that was a distinct waste of time. The match was added to the card as a bonus and the not exactly interesting champions defeated their makeshift challengers, as in the team they should beat, without much effort. So much for having the Revival get somewhere out of all their recent drama, at least for one night. You couldn't possibly have Rezar lose here you see. He doesn't have a partner at the moment, but it makes more sense to beat half of the Revival. Again.

Kickoff Show: US Title: Rusev vs. Shinsuke Nakamura

Rusev is defending and goes straight with the corner shoulders to the ribs. A running clothesline puts Nakamura on the floor but he gets in a shot against the barricade to take over. Back in and some Bad Vibrations set up the running knee to the ribs as they're doing just about the same match (at least the same pace) as before. The knees to the head don't do too much damage to Rusev as he's right back with the spinwheel kick for two.

Nakamura bails to the floor so Rusev loads up a suicide dive (!), which is cut off by a kick to the head. Well thank goodness for that. Nakamura fires off more kicks to the head for a near fall but Rusev ax handles him down. You don't see that one very often, but you do see the Machka Kick, which makes it even worse.

Rusev gets caught in a triangle choke until a suplex finally gets him out of trouble. Nakamura kicks him down again so the referee checks on Rusev, allowing Nakamura to go after the turnbuckle pad. It's Lana offering a distraction but she gets knocked off the apron and hurts her ankle. Rusev is distracted again, and this time a running knee to the back of the head gives Nakamura the title back at 10:15.

Rating: C. I'm so glad they gave Rusev the title so they could give it back to Nakamura to restart his nothing reign. That title is the kiss of death at the moment with no one getting anything out of it. It's not like either of them being champion means anything more than the other, but this is kind of a confusing choice.

Kickoff Show: Cruiserweight Title: Buddy Murphy vs. Akira Tozawa vs. Kalisto vs. Hideo Itami

Murphy is defending and it's one fall to a finish. Everyone goes for rollups to start but can't get anywhere so Tozawa puts Murphy in a Black Widow. Kalisto makes a save and snaps off a hurricanrana to send Murphy outside. Itami starts cleaning house and wins a strike off with Murphy, followed by knocking Kalisto outside.

Tozawa's dive takes Murphy out but Kalisto gets back in to clean house, including monkey flipping Tozawa off the apron onto Murphy. This time it's Tozawa heading back inside to take over, capped off by the suicide headbutt on Itami. Buddy is back up with the running flip dive to the floor onto all three. Kalisto is up first with a hurricanrana driver for two on Murphy as the all over the place offense continues.

Murphy powerbombs Kalisto out of the corner for the same with Tozawa having to make a save. The Salida Del Sol gets a VERY close two on Itami but Murphy takes over again. It's Itami hitting an enziguri on Murphy so Tozawa and Kalisto break it up with stereo superkicks. Murphy is right back up and countering whatever Itami's finisher is supposed to be, setting up Murphy's Law to retain at 12:07.

Rating: C+. This was exactly what it was supposed to be with a bunch of spots and all kinds of entertainment going on. It didn't need to be anything more than a fast paced spotfest and that's what they did here. Murphy retaining is fine and I liked the match well enough. It also didn't overstay its welcome, which is often a problem with a match like this. Good stuff here.

The opening video looks at what the Rumble means, both as a show and as a match itself. This includes some history of the match, meaning some comedy, which doesn't really fit with the serious nature of the video.

Smackdown Women's Title: Asuka vs. Becky Lynch

Asuka is defending after taking the title from Becky in a triple threat match last month. Becky gets shoved down as there's a rather loud high pitched noise. Back up and Asuka kicks the leg out but gets hip attacked

out to the floor. Asuka misses the running kick off the apron and gets her own leg kicked out to put Becky in control for the first time. Back in and Becky sends her face first into the corner before stomping away for good measure. It's too early for the arm but Asuka misses the running hip attack and gets caught in the ropes.

That's fine though as it's the Asuka Lock from the ropes for a few seconds. The missing continues though as Asuka goes shoulder first into the post, setting up a Disarm-Her in the ropes. Becky dives into a knee to the face though and the hip attack connects for two. The missile dropkick misses and Becky gets her own two off a bell to belly. Asuka is right back with most of an Asuka Lock, allowing Becky to roll to the ropes.

They fight to the apron and it's a fisherman's neckbreaker (I think) Asuka onto the floor for a huge (and scary looking) crash. They're both alive and get back in for the slugout with Becky getting the better of it. Asuka gets caught in a super Bexploder for a very close two as the fans are getting way into these near falls.

Becky misses the middle rope legdrop though and gets pulled into the Disarm-Her, which is reversed into an Asuka Lock (on Asuka) for a pretty sweet sequence that you don't see from the women. Asuka flips back for two and there's the big kick to the head. Becky pulls her down into the Disarm-Her but this time it's Asuka escaping. The full Asuka Lock goes on and Asuka flips forward into something close to Cattle Mutilation for the clean tap at 16:37.

Rating: B+. Very good match here with some crazy counters, though having Becky tap clean feels like a bad idea. I fully expect her to come back in and win the Rumble for the title shot, but this was a great example of WWE booking themselves into a corner. This could have been Charlotte losing instead and giving Asuka her win back from Wrestlemania, but instead they take something away from Becky before she's likely winning later in the night, or at Elimination Chamber. Just seems unnecessary.

Smackdown Tag Team Titles: Shane McMahon/The Miz vs. The Bar

Shane and Miz are challenging in matching baseball jerseys. Shane takes

Sheamus down at the bell because that's what you do to a four time World Champion. We officially start with Cesaro vs. Miz as Miz can't get a Skull Crushing Finale. The double teaming begins in the corner so it's Shane running over for a quick save. Shane gets knocked off the apron (I think that's enough to make Sheamus a five time World Champion) but he's right back to save Miz from a powerbomb through the announcers' table.

The big elbow is broken up so Shane hits a top rope clothesline on Sheamus instead. Cesaro uppercuts him in the face though and the double backbreaker gets two on Miz. Sheamus hits a middle rope knee to the chest for the same and it's off to the ten forearms to the chest for a bonus. Miz fights out of a chinlock as this is somehow still going. The hot tag brings in Shane for the umping elbow to Sheamus and the horrible spinning DDT on Cesaro. Coast to Coast is broken up by Cesaro so Shane knocks him into the corner as well.

Since Shane can beat up one of the most successful tag teams of the modern era on his own. Thankfully Cesaro counters into the Swing, and it's a LONG one with the fans giving him a quick standing ovation. Shane is fine of course and grabs what was supposed to be a triangle choke until Sheamus makes the save. Miz gets dropped on the floor and the spike White Noise, which pinned Seth Rollins last year, gets two. Miz breaks up the Brogue Kick so it takes out Cesaro instead, setting up Shane's shooting star press for the pin and the titles at 13:23.

Rating: D. Not only was the match boring, but Shane McMahon just won a title in 2019. This is also the second stupid title loss for the Bar in less than a year after they lost to a ten year old at Wrestlemania. I'm sure they'll get the titles back, but my goodness what is the point in this? To set up Shane vs. Miz at Wrestlemania? Is that what anyone wants to see?

We recap Ronda Rousey vs. Sasha Banks. Rousey tried to be nice to Banks but Sasha got serious and promised to make Rousey tap. That was enough to set Rousey off and we have a fired up champ.

Raw Women's Title: Ronda Rousey vs. Sasha Banks

Rousey is defending. It's way too early for the submissions so Rousey

throws her into the corner and stops for some taunting. Rousey goes for Three Amigos but has to slip out of a Bank Statement attempt. Back up and Banks slaps her in the face, earning herself a kick to the ribs. They fight outside with Rousey punching the post, allowing Banks to hit a heck of a suicide dive. Things finally slow down a bit with Rousey grabbing a chinlock until Banks shoves her into the corner for some running knees.

An elbow to the face puts Banks down but she comes back up with some loud slaps to the back. The Rope walk sets up a Codebreaker to the bad arm and a running knee gets two. More running knees miss in the corner so Rousey tries Piper's Pit, only to be reversed into a heck of an armbar on the bad arm. Rousey starts to roll out but gets pulled into the Bank Statement. It's too close to the ropes though and now Piper's Pit connects.

For some reason Rousey goes up top, earning herself a superplex for two. The armbar goes on again as you can't say Banks isn't focused. Rousey is all fired up and hits three straight judo throws by the arm. Banks sends her outside again though and Rousey's arm is just hanging there. Another suicide dive is countered into the Beast Mode armbar on the floor to make Sasha tap, which didn't make a ton of sense but looked awesome as you got the Death Stare.

Back in and Rousey unloads with right hands and a running knee of her own for two. Banks sends her arm first into the corner again though and it's a double stomp onto the arm. The Backstabber is countered into an armbar attempt but another Piper's Pit is countered into a crossbody for two. The Bank Statement can't quite go on so it's a Fujiwara armbar in the middle of the ring. Rousey rolls out of that as well and it's a gutwrench suplex into Piper's Pit for the pin at 13:48, though it looked like Rousey's shoulders were down as well.

Rating: B+. I liked this even more than I was expecting to and it was a heck of a match. The arm stuff made sense and I'm glad they went with that instead of the back/ribs stuff that we've done a few times now. Banks looked more motivated than she has in years here and that's not exactly surprising. As a bonus, Rousey was really showing off the athleticism here and made herself look even more talented than usual.

Very good match and worth seeing.

Post match Rousey tries to show respect and gives her the Four Horsewomen sign but Banks isn't having it and storms off.

Kickoff Show recap.

Women's Royal Rumble

90 second intervals. Beth Phoenix is out for commentary and it's Lacey Evans in at #1 and gives a rather condescending promo about wanting to clean up the division. Natalya is in at #2, which is quite the letdown after that kind of a setup. Lacey flips away from Natalya to start but they both miss dropkicks at the same time. The nipup doesn't quite work for Lacey and it's a wristlock to keep her in trouble. A hurricanrana takes Natalya down though and it's Mandy Rose in at #3.

Natalya is right back up and does the still ridiculous looking double Sharpshooter until Liv Morgan is in at #4...and is eliminated in about two seconds off a Natalya backdrop. Lacey turns on Mandy but stops to pull a napkin from her trunks and wipe down a bit before throwing it at the other two (make your own Priscilla Kelly jokes). Mickie James is in at #5 and kicks Natalya in the head. No one goes for an elimination until Ember Moon is in at #6 to a big reaction (complete with a CGI moon, making me want to play Major's Mask). Moon gets in all the usual until Mandy catches her in the corner.

Billie Kay is in at #7 but says she's staying outside until Peyton Royce is here. Smart move actually and perfectly legal. Nikki Cross is in at #8 and sprints to ringside where she beats up Kay. House is cleaned but Lacey manages to avoid getting thrown out. Kay is inside now as the ring is starting to get too full. Peyton Royce is in at #9 and helps Billie up to go after Nikki. Some double teaming keeps her in trouble but there's no elimination as Tamina is in at #10.

We currently have Evans, Natalya, Rose, James, Moon, Kay, Cross, Royce and Tamina. Kay goes after Tamina and nearly gets thrown out, but instead Tamina goes after Cross and this the top rope splash. A superkick puts James out and it's Xia Li (of the Mae Young Classic) in at #11. Some

kicks to the head drop Tamina and even more put everyone else down. Xia stands tall as Sara Logan is in at #12. The IIconics get together and dumb Cross in a rather quick elimination.

Charlotte is in at #13 and you can tell things are getting serious. Li gets sent to the apron and booted out as the ring is suddenly a lot less full. Tamina scores with a superkick and it's Kairi Sane in at #14. The IIconics seem to have been eliminated as Sane is having way too much fun with her telescope. Charlotte gets Tamina out and there's the top rope forearm from Sane to Moon. Charlotte welcomes the chops from Sane, who moves on to knocking Logan down.

The Insane Elbow connects and Natalya knocks Logan out. Maria Kanellis is in at #15 to get us to halftime and hopefully write off some of the rumors about her leaving. A double bulldog has Charlotte and Moon down but for some reason Maria stops for a dance, allowing Charlotte to nail her with a spear. Naomi is in at #16 and hits a sitout jawbreaker on Rose, as you had to expect.

A suplex to the apron sets up a kick to the head and Mandy is out. Naomi takes her time on the apron though and gets powerbombed against the barricade, only to kick Mandy in the head and crawl up onto the barricade. The tightrope walk lets Naomi get around for a Kofi Kingston-esque dive to the steps (that was VERY impressive) but Mandy pulls her to the floor anyway. Charlotte kicks Evans out and it's Candice LeRae in at #17 for another NXT surprise. A Black Widow has Ember in trouble but she comes back with a gutbuster to put Candice down.

Natalya powerbombs Charlotte out of the corner and it's a dancing Alicia Fox at #18. Fox fires off dropkicks and Maria offers a friendship, which Fox can go with, at least for the time being. A dropkick to Sane sets up a DDT and it's time to dance again. Maria hands Fox her captain's hat, which goes on Maria's head for a change. Maria STOMPS ON THE HAT though and Fox is furious...as she throws herself on the mat in a near fit. Yet another dropkick puts Maria out and Kacy Catanzaro (NXT) is in at #19.

Some headscissors let Kacy put some people down with one putting Fox onto the apron. Zelina Vega (as someone from Street Fighter) is in at #20,

giving us Natalya, Moon, Charlotte, Sane, LeRae, Fox, Catanzaro and Vega. LeRae and Vega go at it as a followup from NXT and it's Ruby Riott, flanked by Morgan and Logan, in at #21. The Squad pull people underneath the ropes to cause some chaos but do managed to eliminate Fox and LeRae as Vega is hiding underneath the ring.

Dana Brooke is in at #22 and hits a heck of a sitout powerbomb on Catanzaro. The Squad keeps pulling people outside without eliminating most of them as Io Shirai is in at #23. She beats up the Squad in short order and hits the moonsault to the floor (she was never in so it's not an elimination).

Riott and Shirai fight to the apron and it's Rhea Ripley in at #24. She throws Catanzaro to the floor but Catanzaro lands on her back, allowing her to backflip onto the barricade and then hand walk to the post, where she flips up and climbs back in. Ripley throws her out without much of a problem, but WHAT THE HECK WAS THAT AND WHY CAN SHE DO SOMETHING LIKE THAT???

Sonya Deville is in at #25 and Brooke is eliminated as Vega keeps watching....and Hornswoggle pops out from underneath the ring skirt next to her. The chase is on and Vega goes inside where she's eliminated in short order. Alexa Bliss makes her return at #26 and moonsaults into double knees to Moon's chest. A sunset bomb plants Charlotte and it's Sonya unloading on Bliss in the corner. Bliss gets rid of Sonya and it's Bayley (to a pop) at #27.

That means the pace can pick up and it's Riott and Ripley being tossed out. Lana is in at #28 and selling the ankle from earlier in the night. The fans are begging for Becky to come out and take her place as Lana has taken over a minute to get about a third of the way to the ring. Nia Jax is in at #29 and jumps Lana on the way to the ring so I think you know where this is going. Shirai moonsault onto Jax but gets thrown outside, landing hard onto her ankle. Jax throws Natalya out as well and it's Carmella in at #30, giving us a final field of Charlotte, Bayley, Jax, Sane, Moon, Bliss and maybe Lana, who never got in the ring.

With Carmella taking Jax down, here's Becky to appeal to Fit Finlay (I

call international collusion!) to let her take Lana's spot. Finlay agrees and we have the final field. We get straight to the Becky vs. Jax showdown and Becky unloads on her to a freaking roar. Bliss pulls Moon to the apron and it's a leg trip to get rid of Moon after 53 minutes. Bayley gives Bliss a buckle bomb and that's enough for the elimination.

That leaves us with Bayley, Nia, Carmella, Charlotte and Becky. Jax gets knocked through the ropes and Charlotte reverses a running headscissors from Carmella but can't get rid of her. A running big boot knocks Carmella out and Bayley sends Charlotte to the apron. Nia throws Bayley out (with Bayley clutching her knee on the landing) to get us down to three. Becky rolls to the floor and Charlotte fireman's carries Nia...nowhere actually.

Nia goes over the top and Becky pulls her out, leaving us with Charlotte vs. Becky, much to the fans' approval. Nia pulls Becky off the apron though and we've got a knee injury. Becky charges inside anyway and gets her leg taken out rather quickly. Charlotte cranks on the leg but Becky pops up and sends her to the apron. A running shot is enough to get rid of Charlotte to give Becky the win at 1:11:23.

Rating: B. I think I liked this one more than last year's. The winner was the predictable (not a bad thing) and right call, but the bigger deal here was the lack of legends. It's a good sign that the divisions have grown enough that they can have one of these without having so many people added to the match from years past. The NXT women were a nice touch and the match never felt like it was dragging.

I wouldn't mind for it to be a little less messy though, as there were too many people on the floor at various times and a few too many spots of people saving themselves. That being said, Catanzaro is not human and that save was incredible, likely more impressive than most of Kofi's. The Hornswoggle spot was hilarious too and I'm very relieved that he was used for that instead of a Rumble entry. Good match here, as the division looks a lot deeper this year.

We recap the Smackdown World Title match. Daniel Bryan turned heel back in November and won the title from Styles via a low blow. AJ Styles has

turned it up a few notches though and is now the REAL AJ Styles again. This should be a heck of a match if given time, but it's almost 10:00 and we have two World Title matches and a Royal Rumble to go.

Smackdown World Title: AJ Styles vs. Daniel Bryan

Bryan is defending. AJ starts fast and slugs away but gets sent hard into the post for a trip to the floor. The shoulder is sent into the post again and it's off to a hammerlock. Bryan seems very pleased with AJ possibly having a bloody nose and hammers away on the mat some more.

AJ gets back up with a suplex and right hands of his own, only to get suplexed onto the back of his head. Bryan gets sent outside for some kicks to the face as this is severely dragging. Back in and they trade submission finishers with AJ CRANKING on the leg in a painful looking visual. The rope is grabbed and Bryan kicks him down again. They head up top with AJ flipping out of a belly to back superplex before grabbing the Calf Crusher.

That's broken up again but AJ gets kicked out of the air on a springboard attempt. Bryan takes the Pele though and they're both down. Cue Erick Rowan of all people as they get back up, only to have Bryan enziguri the referee by mistake. The Styles Clash hits Bryan, drawing in Rowan to chokeslam Styles. The referee revives to count the pin as Bryan retains at 24:18.

Rating: C-. This is a good example of a match that wasn't exactly great and didn't need to take place at this point. It's nearly 10:30 and we're going to be lucky to finish this show by midnight. They're already doing a rematch from Bryan pinning him clean and it was just to set up Rowan as Bryan's enforcer. This wasn't the right place and it came at the wrong time. It's not bad, but it didn't need to go this way.

We look at the big brawl after last night's Takeover, which set up a six man tag during halftime of the Super Bowl.

We recap Finn Balor vs. Brock Lesnar. It's literally billed as David vs. Goliath, with the much smaller Balor earning the shot when Braun Strowman lost his shot after destroying Vince McMahon's limo. Balor seems to be in

over his head but wants to fight, as is his custom.

Universal Title: Brock Lesnar vs. Finn Balor

Balor is defending and charges straight at Lesnar at the bell. A few more shots have him in trouble but he catches a charge with a belly to belly. Balor wisely rolls outside with Brock following, only to get sent ribs first into the announcers' table. Back in and it's more belly to bellies to put Balor in more trouble.

A clothesline turns Balor inside out but Lesnar's ribs are still banged up. Lesnar goes to finish with the F5, which is reversed into a hard DDT. Balor stomps away at the ribs and gets in a jumping double stomp. They head outside with Balor nailing the running flip dive as Lesnar is in trouble. Back in and the Coup de Grace connects for two, but Brock slaps on the Kimura for the tap at 8:37.

Rating: C+. This was good while it lasted but it was way too short and there was no way it was going to be much more without the extra time. Balor was game and trying with Lesnar doing his usual very good selling, but with less time than a Raw main event, there wasn't much they could do.

Post match Balor hits some more German suplexes and an F5.

Jerry Lawler and JBL come out for commentary.

Men's Royal Rumble

Elias is in at #1 and let's have a song. Before he can sing though, it's Jeff Jarrett in at #2 for the big music off. Jeff does his catchphrases and they agree to a duet but Elias punches him in the face and a guitar shot is enough to get rid of Jarrett. Shinsuke Nakamura is in at #3 and goes straight at Elias in the corner. Elias pops up with a rope walk as Kurt Angle is in at #4. Suplexed abound and it's Big E. in at #5. The Big Ending to Big E. doesn't work and it's a bunch of knees, including one in the corner to get rid of Angle. Johnny Gargano is in at #6 and it's a running hurricanrana on Elias.

A not great looking tornado DDT drops Big E., followed by the slingshot

spear to Elias (Johnny must not like him). Jinder Mahal is in at #7 and after a few knees, is eliminated by Gargano. The Singh Brothers aren't done though as they get dragged in for a beatdown from Elias and Big E. Samoa Joe is in at #8 and gets a rather strong reaction. The sidestep avoids Gargano's middle rope kick to the face and a rake to the eyes is enough to get rid of Big E.

Curt Hawkins is in at #9, hits a forearm to Joe's back, and then bails to the floor. For some reason he comes back in, only to walk into the Koquina Clutch. Elias makes a save so Hawkins can bail to the floor for some hiding underneath the ring. It's Seth Rollins in at #10, giving us Elias, Nakamura, Gargano, Joe, Hawkins (underneath the ring) and Rollins. Seth gets rid of Elias in a hurry and it's Titus O'Neil in at #11, complete with stopping to make sure he doesn't slide underneath the ring.

Instead he sees Hawkins and goes after him underneath the ring, only to charge after him and get tossed in a hurry. Joe dumps Hawkins though and it's Kofi Kingston in at #12. Rollins runs Nakamura over with an elbow and the clock seems to be getting a little faster as Mustafa Ali is in at #13. That means a rolling X Factor to Joe and a COME ON to Nakamura. Shinsuke charges and that's enough for an elimination.

Ali hits a tornado DDT on Gargano but he runs into the overhead belly to belly from Joe into the corner. Dean Ambrose is in at #14 and it's time for the showdown with Rollins. Dean knocks Kofi to the floor but Kofi puts his feet on the apron and rolls over until he gets to the steps. Kofi comes back in with a top rope DDT to Ambrose but Dean is right back up with Dirty Deeds to Gargano. Johnny is out but Kofi hits Dean with Trouble in Paradise. No Way Jose is in at #15 and is out so fast that he might have broken Santino Marella's record.

No worries though as he and the conga line dance straight to the back. JBL: "Does he realize that he was just eliminated from the Royal Rumble?" Drew McIntyre is in at #16 and headbutts Jose before wrecking some of the conga line. It's a series of Claymore kicks, including a great one to Joe, to put everyone down. Kofi gets knocked over the top as Xavier Woods is in at #17. As Kofi is getting shoved to the floor, he sunset flips Woods with only one foot touching, allowing Woods to stand up and

piggyback Kofi to the steps. Once inside, Drew clotheslines them both out in a funny bit.

Pete Dunne is in at #18 and goes straight after Ali. Joe can't suplex him and it's time to go after a bunch of fingers. Dunne suplexes Ali onto Joe and Andrade is in at #19. A spinning DDT plants Dunne as there is some crazy talent in there. Apollo Crews is in at #20, giving us Joe, Rollins, Ali, Ambrose, McIntyre, Dunne, Andrade and Crews. Things slow down and it's Aleister Black in at #21. A huge kick drops Ali and another one eliminates Ambrose. Shelton Benjamin is in at #22 with Paydirt to Benjamin, followed by Ali dumping Joe.

Baron Corbin is in at #23 with a good Deep Six to Ali and a right hand to get rid of Crews. It's Jeff Hardy in at #24 as Black and McIntyre take turns seeing how hard they can kick people. Corbin gets rid of Black and McIntyre dumps Dunne as Rey Mysterio is in at #25. Rey walks straight into a chokebreaker from Corbin and Andrade stomps away. Bobby Lashley is in at #26...and is out in about ten seconds thanks to Rollins. Lashley is livid and pulls Rollins outside for a spinebuster through the announcers' table. It's Braun Strowman in at #27 and he gets rid of Corbin with ease.

Shelton is out as well and it's Dolph Ziggler in at #28. Hardy is knocked out and Ziggler gets rid of McIntyre as a bonus. Randy Orton is in at #29 and gets to stare down Strowman but the RK0 is easily blocked. The powerslam connects and Strowman puts Andrade in an electric chair, while Andrade superplexes Ali. Rey adds something close to a high crossbody for the big crash, followed by Strowman going shoulder first into the post, as is his custom. R-Truth is in at #30...and Nia Jax jumps him from behind?

Nia takes his place, giving us Mysterio, Andrade, Ziggler, Orton, Strowman (on the floor), Ali, Rollins (on the floor) and Jax. Nia dumps Ali out and gets to star Orton down. The RK0 is blocked so Ziggler superkicks Nia into the 619 (JBL: "Rey don't do that!"). An RK0 takes Jax down and it's Rey baseball sliding her out. There's an RK0 to get rid of Rey but Andrade throws Orton out. We're down to Ziggler, Strowman, Rollins and Andrade with Ziggler and Andrade striking it out.

Strowman comes back in to run them both over as Rollins is getting back up. That means the running shoulder on the floor and Strowman throws him inside, where the triple teaming begins on the monster. Strowman pops back up to get rid of Andrade and knocks Ziggler out as well. Rollins puts Strowman on the apron but charge into a chokeslam. Not over the top, but a chokeslam nonetheless. They get back in and Rollins pulls him to the apron by the head ala Chris Benoit and Big Show. It's not enough for an elimination so Rollins sends him into the post and adds a Stomp for the win at 57:34.

Rating: D. It's really hard to hate a match that had that kind of stretch in the teens but my goodness they missed on the final batch. Nia Jax as #30 wasn't interesting and isn't exactly an upgrade over someone who can at least do some funny stuff. The rest of the match wasn't much better, as a lot of spots were wasted on nothing entries like Hawkins, O'Neil and Mahal. Throw in a comedy legend here or there to spice things up a bit and this is a lot better.

There were some good points here, as they went with the logical and obvious winner (not a bad thing) in Rollins and showcased a lot of young guys. Other than Black I can't imagine any of them sticking around on the main roster but it's nice to see them get a chance against the big names. Just...be more interesting.

Overall Rating: D+. There were parts here that worked but my goodness the length crippled this show. You could have EASILY shed an hour and a half off of this thing by dropping the Smackdown Tag Team Title match, the Smackdown Women's Title match, and the Smackdown World Title match. Make Asuka vs. Becky (which was awesome) a big TV match and put Styles vs. Bryan on in a similar spot. Just because you can put something on the card doesn't mean you should and that's the big lesson here. This was almost an hour longer than last year's way too long show because WWE refuses to hit the brakes.

There are good parts to the show but it's the overall presentation that is severely lacking. It's the length, it's the lack of any surprises in the Rumbles (again: not a bad idea, but certainly not a thrilling one), it's the lack of interesting names in the Rumble and it's spending way

too much time on stuff that doesn't need to be on the show. I was begging for this show to be over at the halfway point and it just kept dragging along. There is no excuse for any show, including Wrestlemania, to be starting at 5 and ending at nearly midnight. That's the big problem here and there's very little that the wrestlers can do about it.

Results

Asuka b. Becky Lynch – Asuka Lock

Shane McMahon/The Miz b. The Bar – Shooting star press to Cesaro

Ronda Rousey b. Sasha Banks – Piper's Pit

Becky Lynch won the Women's Royal Rumble last eliminating Charlotte

Daniel Bryan b. AJ Styles – Pin after a chokeslam from Erick Rowan

Brock Lesnar b. Finn Balor – Kimura

Seth Rollins won the Men's Royal Rumble last eliminating Braun Strowman

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Royal Rumble Count-Up – 2017 (2018 Redo): Remember The Bunch Of Lama Alamo Jokes

Royal Rumble 2017

Date: January 29, 2017

Location: Alamodome, San Antonio, Texas

Attendance: 52,020

Commentators: Michael Cole, Corey Graves, Byron Saxton, Mauro Ranallo, John Bradshaw Layfield, David Otunga, Tom Phillips

It's kind of amazing how much this show has been forgotten in just about a year. Other than AJ Styles vs. John Cena, I can barely remember a single thing about this show. I know who won the Rumble and who were some of the bigger stars in the match but the rest is kind of a blur, which isn't a good sign for what I'm in for here. Let's get to it.

The aisle is crazy long and would require a cart to bring some of the wrestlers to the ring during the Rumble. There's something cool about that, on both fronts actually.

Kickoff Show: Naomi/Nikki Bella/Becky Lynch vs. Alexa Bliss/Mickie James/Natalya

This would be the "throw all the Smackdown women into one match" match. Oh and dang I forgot how stupid the four person announcers' booth on Smackdown was. It's almost as stupid as having a 50,000 person dome and having a match an hour and a half before the show starts because THE PLACE IS FREAKING EMPTY! Like is anyone going to not watch this show on the Network if there isn't a match going on the two hour pre-show?

This is mainly about Becky vs. James/Bliss and the rest are there because....well because the writers don't know how to write singles matches for the women and still don't do this day. For a secondary story, Natalya and Nikki are feuding because Natalya is jealous so she said that Cena will never marry Nikki. You know those are fighting words.

Nikki and Natalya start things off with Natalya doing You Can't See Me. That means a slap to the face and there are so few people being so quiet that you can hear what the women are saying. Bliss comes in and gets caught with a facebuster for two. It's off to Naomi for half of a double dropkick with Nikki's part not even coming close. Nikki and company hit a triple suplex to send them outside, followed by a dive from Naomi as we take a break.

Back with Becky clotheslining Natalya and hitting a running forearm in the corner. They head outside with Mickie getting in a cheap shot to drop Becky, allowing Natalya to snap a suplex to really take over. Back in and Becky gets driven into the corner again, allowing Bliss to choke a bit. Mickie adds a hard kick to the face as the announcers argue over whether or not cheating is smart.

A Michinoku Driver plants Becky but Natalya can't get Suplex City (Her words. Well Lesnar's words, though JR said it about thirteen years earlier.). Instead it's a double clothesline so Naomi can come in and clean house. The still dumb looking dancing kicks drop Bliss as everything breaks down. A kick to the head sets up the split legged moonsault to give Naomi the pin on Bliss at 9:39.

Rating: C-. The lack of a crowd either in their seats or really interested in this one hurt it a lot but the work wasn't terrible. The women's division had gotten so much better by this point that you could trust them to go out and have a match like this, though the stories need to be stronger. I'm really having an issue caring about Nikki never getting to marry her dream husband and complete her fairy tale story but I'm not exactly the target audience.*

Kickoff Show: Raw Tag Team Titles: Sheamus/Cesaro vs. Anderson and Gallows

Sheamus and Cesaro are defending and there are two referees due to some screwy finishes as of late. The crowd is MUCH better now, making the place look like there's an actual audience for the show. Cesaro dropkicks Anderson at the bell for two and a gutwrench suplex gets the same less than thirty seconds in.

Gallows loads up a cheap shot from the apron but the second referee catches him, making the gimmick actually work. Sheamus grabs a Regal Roll into Cesaro's jumping double stomp for two more but Anderson is back up with a kick to the face to take over. It's off to Gallows, who is quickly kicked down so the champs can take him into the corner. This has been mostly one sided so far but Gallows gets in a backdrop for a breather. Not that the fans seem to care for the most part though.

A big boot knocks Sheamus off the apron and we take a break. Back (after the commercial has been cut from the Network) with Cesaro suplexing Gallows and rolling over to bring Sheamus back in. The ten forearms to the chest have Gallows in trouble and a top rope clothesline gets two. Super White Noise gets the same but Gallows shoves Sheamus away and makes the hot tag to Anderson.

The second referee won't allow some cheating so Swiss Death gives Cesaro two. A 619 and a high crossbody give him the same but Anderson kicks him down again. Sheamus breaks up the Magic Killer and a referee eats a Brogue Kick. The second referee comes in to see Cesaro put Anderson in the Sharpshooter, only to have Gallows break it up with a kick to the face. Everything breaks down again and it's a Magic Killer for Sheamus, followed by a rollup with tights to pin Cesaro at 10:28.

Rating: C+. Nice power fight here with both teams hitting each other rather hard. That's all this needed to be, though I could go for adding a different style in there. Power vs. power isn't going to work all that well in the long term but at least they had a good match here. These title changes didn't really matter though as it was all going to change when the Hardys came back. No one knew that yet though and at least we had something good here.

Kickoff Show: Nia Jax vs. Sasha Banks

Nia injured her a month or so ago and tonight is about revenge. Sasha doesn't have her knee brace on as Nia drives her into the ropes and easily shoves off a headlock. A rope walk springboard goes just as badly as Banks can't get anything going early on. Jax runs her over and we take an early break.

Back with Sasha trying a standing Bank Statement and having it broken up with ease. Jax grabs a Brock Lock and swings Banks around until a rope can be grabbed. Sasha finally avoids a charge to send Jax into the post, followed by the top rope double knees for two. Sasha comes up holding her knee though and the pop up Samoan drop puts her away at 5:13.

Rating: D+. This was just a step above a squash and really only served to keep Nia around. Banks is going to be fine after a loss like this while Nia still doesn't have the big defining win (which would still be the case a year later). There was no need for this to be on pay per view though and it could have easily been done on Raw. That's never a good sign.

And now, a nearly four hour show. I know I say this a lot but I'm almost gassed just watching that Kickoff Show. There's really no need to do it this way, especially when you have the horrible empty stadium for the first match.

Completely standard opening video, though they do play in the cool "Remember the Rumble" tagline to show off a lot of the famous clips. If there's one thing WWE does well, it's look back at their own history. The rest of the matches get some time as well with each one having something to remember as well.

Raw Women's Title: Bayley vs. Charlotte

Charlotte is defending and still has never lost a singles match on pay per view. Bayley gets wrestled down to start as Charlotte grabs a front facelock. The fans seem split here despite giving Bayley a heck of a reaction on her entrance. Charlotte heads outside for no apparent reason, allowing Bayley to grab her by the hair and snap her over the middle rope (basically a Stunner) to take over. A headscissors gets two and it's already time to hit the stalling.

Bayley makes the mistake of going outside and gets kicked into the steps as she doesn't have much of an answer for Charlotte's power game. Back in and Charlotte slams Bayley's face into the mat a few times but makes sure to throw in a quick pose (that's the Flair in her). We hit the chinlock with Charlotte's hair falling over Bayley's face, giving us a rather odd

visual of Bayley as a blonde. A knee drop gets two on Bayley and Charlotte is getting annoyed at Bayley sticking around.

Yet another kickout off a neckbreaker makes the frustration even worse so Charlotte does her figure four necklock into the face plants on the mat. The flips to send Bayley back first into the mat make it even worse as Charlotte is completely dominant so far. Charlotte stops to mock Bayley though and a heck of a slap cuts the champ off. A battle of the chops goes to Charlotte (well duh) but Bayley bounces out of the corner with an armdrag. A springboard crossbody (with a few too many bounces) drops Charlotte again and a jumping spinning Downward Spiral (not bad) does it again.

The top rope elbow (which looked awesome on impact) gets a very close two and you can feel the crowd breathe on the kickout. Charlotte (who might be bleeding from the mouth) kicks the knee out though and the Figure Four goes on. The referee catches her grabbing the ropes though and both women are down. Charlotte is up first but her moonsault only grazes knees to give Bayley two. Bayley goes up but gets shoved off to the floor in a heap. As she gets back in, Natural Selection onto the apron retains the title at 13:01.

Rating: B-. Bayley was fighting here but came up short, which is exactly how her character needs to go. For some reason WWE didn't quite get this and instead put the title on her two weeks later in a nothing Raw match, ignoring the idea of building her up as an underdog. Charlotte was her usual awesome self here and that makes for a fun match, though the future didn't go the way it should have. At least the first match was solid though.

The shark cage is lowered. This might require an explanation.

We recap the Raw World Title match. Roman Reigns had come close to taking the title from Kevin Owens but Chris Jericho interfered to cost Reigns the match. Therefore it's time for a rematch with Jericho in a one man cage (the shark cage) above the ring. Jericho is of course scared of heights so this should be fun. It would be a better idea if they hadn't done it in NXT not too long before this.

Raw World Title: Roman Reigns vs. Kevin Owens

Owens is defending and this is No DQ. Jericho takes his sweet time getting into the cage (as he should) and is still not in even when Reigns comes out. The Canadians try some double teaming and knock Reigns into the cage all, only to have Reigns fight them off (and the fans are really, REALLY not pleased) and send Jericho into the cage to get us going. The cage is raised like a sexy pinata (Jericho's very accurate term for himself) and Owens jumps Reigns from behind.

They waste no time in fighting out to the floor and then into the crowd with Reigns hitting him in the ribs with a metal stand. Back to ringside with Owens being bounced off the German announcers' table but coming back with a whip into the steps. Owens pulls six chairs from underneath the ring and sets up four at ringside, two by two. A monitor shot to the ribs sets up the Cannonball against the barricade and Owens continues to be over like free beer in a frat house.

With Reigns down, Owens sets up two more chairs on top of the four he already had. One more is placed on top but of course the powerbomb and suplex attempts don't work to prevent a broken back. Back in and Reigns sends him shoulder first into the post before loading up a table. That's enough to make the fans cheer Reigns (I'm as shocked as you are) but a Backstabber gives Owens two.

Another Cannonball, with Owens mocking Reigns' spear pose, is countered into a powerbomb. The apron dropkick rocks the champ again as this has been better than I was expecting so far. They're beating each other up quite well and it's pretty entertaining, despite Jericho being a non-factor so far. They head outside with Reigns getting superkicked onto a table, setting up a frog splash from the top to the floor in a big crash.

That's only good for two (well duh) so Owens dedicates a chair shot to Jericho and gets another near fall. A chair is wedged into the corner because wrestlers never learn a thing. Owens scores with a superkick and manages to send Reigns into the chair as I'm not sure what to think. It's not like that's never worked before but it's about as rare as Jericho eating crab cakes and goat's milk.

With that not working, Jericho tosses Owens some brass knuckles but Reigns blocks the Superman Punch. Roman's Superman Punch gets two and a Samoan drop through the chair is good for the same. You would think being driven THROUGH A CHAIR would be a big time match but since this is modern wrestling, something that big is now just a regular move. It's the price you pay for all the big spots and violence.

Roman puts another table in the corner before another Superman Punch gets two. A spear is countered into a Stunner of all things but Reigns kicks out again. We continue the Austin homage with a mudhole stomping and a Cannonball (not so much Austin) as Owens is getting frustrated. That makes him do something dumb, like trying a superplex through that pile of chairs.

Reigns breaks that up and Superman Punches Owens through the pile instead for a very loud crash. A powerbomb puts Reigns through the announcers' table but here's Braun Strowman to beat the heck out of Reigns. Roman is sent into the post, followed by the running powerslam through the table in the corner to retain Owens' title at 23:27.

Rating: B+. This was better than I was expecting and while it feels like a similar ending to Randy Orton vs. John Cena from Royal Rumble 2015, it's still a good way to keep the title on Owens for the time being. They had a very good power brawl and Owens retaining is the right move, especially with the feud with Strowman getting a big boost. Jericho was barely a factor and that's a good thing given that they were about to split in the near future.

To really fill in time, we're doing a countdown of the thirty greatest moments in Rumble history, starting with 30-16 (or 30-15 as Cole puts it). Well kind of as the list is actually 30 facts, which is kind of Rumble By The Numbers.

30. Bret Hart was the first entrant

29. 870 people have entered

28. 3 women have entered and each has eliminated at least one man

27. 23 people have won, meaning 98% of the entrants are losers
26. 4 Rumbles have been in Texas
25. California and Florida have held 5 Rumbles each
24. 507,102 fans have seen the Rumble
23. Rey Mysterio lasted longer than anyone ever at 1:02:12
22. Edge won the Rumble in 7:37
21. Santino Marella was eliminated in 1 second
20. The longest time in a single Rumble without winning is Bob Backlund with 1:01:10
19. HHH has spent the most time in the Rumble with 4:06:08.
18. 46 Hall of Famers have competed
17. 9 Hall of Famers have won
16. Mick Foley entered the Rumble 3 times in 1998

Raw boss Stephanie McMahon mocks Raw underling Mick for Strowman interfering when Smackdown bosses Shane McMahon and Daniel Bryan come in. They roll the tumbler so Sami Zayn can come in and pick his number, which of course takes some time. Before Sami can open his ball, Dean Ambrose comes in searching for churros. He gets a number but is off to take a nap until he's due in the Rumble. After going to a crowd shot of watching this in the arena (erg), Sami gets #8.

Austin Aries joins commentary for the Cruiserweight Title match.

We recap Rich Swann vs. Neville. Swann is the Cruiserweight Champion but Neville has declared himself the King of the Cruiserweights. That's completely accurate and it's time for Swann to take a heck of a beating and give up a title that doesn't belong to him. This is about as obvious of an ending as you're going to get. They throw in some history between the two with Neville mentoring Swann both in Japan and here in America.

That's better than nothing and more than I would expect from a match like this, even if Neville winning is pretty much guaranteed.

Cruiserweight Title: Neville vs. Rich Swann

Neville is challenging and stops himself from doing his usual entrance because the fans don't deserve it. That's a nice touch and makes him feel different instead of the same guy who just happens to be a villain now. Feeling out process to start until Swann flips over Neville and misses a dropkick.

Neville gets sent outside for a dive but is fine enough to drive Swann right into the corner. A missile dropkick sets up a jackknife cover for two and Neville stands on Swann's head. Neville wants to know if this is it and gets crucified for two. Back up and Neville forearm the heck out of Swann for two more and we're off to the chinlock. The comeback is enough to have Neville take him outside for some whips into the barricade.

Back in and Neville comes up the top, diving straight into a superkick to the jaw. That one looked awesome and both guys are down. Another kick to the jaw and a super hurricanrana sets up a Phoenix flip dive to the floor to put Neville in trouble. They head back inside with Swann hammering away before getting two off something like a Warrior splash.

Neville isn't down enough that he can't crotch Swann on top. He also can't hit the superplex but settles for a hard superkick to stagger the champ. Rich's spinning kick to the head gets two as Neville gets his foot on the ropes. Swann again takes too long to get up top, allowing Neville to superplex him into the Rings of Saturn for the tap to make Neville champion at 13:29.

Rating: B-. They were beating the heck out of each other in a better than average match. Instead of having Neville squash him in relatively short order, Swann got in some offense, only to eventually not be good enough to overcome the King of the Cruiserweights. This was entertaining, but Neville is going to need some better challengers.

We recap AJ Styles vs. John Cena. Styles defeated Cena twice in a row

last year, including with one clean pinfall. Then Cena said he wanted to challenge the champion at the Rumble and since he's John Cena and one title shy of tying Ric Flair's record, the match was made.

Smackdown World Title: AJ Styles vs. John Cena

Cena is challenging and has the black shorts on here so you know it's a big night. AJ scores with a kick to the leg so Cena clotheslines him to the apron. Cena gets in a few right hands but charges into a boot in the corner to let AJ take over. Back to back knee drops have Cena in trouble but AJ stops to yell at the crowd. A third knee, this time with a You Can't See Me, misses and Cena is right back with a backdrop.

AJ sticks the landing on an AA though and there's an enziguri to put Cena down again. There's a hurricanrana and Cena doesn't seem to know what to do with Styles. The running seated forearm gives AJ two more but Cena punches him in the face. The Shuffle is broken up though and AJ grabs a wheelbarrow facebuster to put Cena down again. AJ hits the Phenomenal Blitz, only to have Cena hit that hard running clothesline for a breather that he uses when he needs a breather.

Now the Shuffle connects but it's way too early for the AA. AJ grabs a torture rack into a spinning powerbomb for two more and we get a bit of a pause. They're doing a good job here of going with the slower pace to build things up here, which is exactly what they should be doing.

The Phenomenal Forearm misses and it's an AA for two. Another hard running clothesline gives Cena two more but he charges into a Pele to the shoulder. Now the Forearm connects for two more as they're even in the near falls off the finishers. AJ starts firing off the hard kicks to the chest and Cena doesn't seem like he's breathing very well. One too many kicks earns him an electric chair into a faceplant though and Cena is right back into it.

They slug it out with JBL describing AJ as blocking every punch with his face. Apparently that's fine enough to reverse a right hand into the Calf Crusher but of course Cena reverses into the STF to a nice round of applause. At least they respect some wrestling abilities. Somehow AJ reverses that into an STF of his own but Cena powers to his feet. Instead

of an AA though, it's off to a Figure Four on the champ (because we must praise Flair, though it's appropriate here).

AJ pulls himself up though and tries a cross armbreaker, which of course is countered into a powerbomb for two. Cena goes up top for the Fameasser but gets powerbombed out of the air. Now the Styles Clash is good for two as the fans are feeling the near falls (as they should with the match picking WAY up in a hurry). Code Red gives Cena two more, followed by AJ's fireman's carry backbreaker for the same.

Something like a swinging Big Ending (called a cutter by Mauro) gives Cena two more so it's time for the big guns. Cena busts out the super AA.....for two. You can see the look of disbelief on Cena's face and now the fans aren't sure what to think. The Styles Clash gives AJ his own near fall but Cena counters the Phenomenal Forearm into back to back AA's for the pin and the title at 24:01.

Rating: A. This took its time to build up and it's one of the best matches of 2017. Cena using raw power to start but eventually learning what AJ was going to throw at him and adapting made for a great story. He couldn't win with the mega power move either, eventually having to counter AJ to beat him. That builds on their previous matches and it's a classic match as a result.

Cena celebrates. JBL: "Man that was good!" Yeah pretty much. Cena heads into the crowd and hands the title to a Make-A-Wish kid because he's that awesome.

We look at Seth Rollins invading Takeover: San Antonio to call out HHH, who cost him his spot in the Rumble. HHH said Rollins needs to be careful what he wished for. Worry not though as STEPHANIE will be on Raw tomorrow night to deal with Rollins. I'd be terrified too.

Jerry Lawler comes out for commentary on the Rumble.

Back to the Rumble by the Numbers.

15. Only 16 of the 30 possible numbers have won

14. 7 winners are from 1-10

13. 4 have been from 11-20
12. 19 have been from 21-40
11. 27 is the lucky number
10. 1 and 2 have produced 4 winners
9. 1 and 2 have been the final two entrants twice (1995 and 1999)
8. Only one person has won from the same number twice (Batista at #28)
7. Kane has entered the most Royal Rumbles
6. Kane has the most career eliminations
5. Roman Reigns has the most eliminations in one match
4. The World Title has been on the line twice
3. Three men have been runner up twice (Cena, Big Show, HHH)
2. Five men have won twice (Cena, HHH, Hogan, Shawn Michaels, Batista)
1. Only Steve Austin has won three Rumbles

Royal Rumble

Two minutes intervals and it's Big Cass in at #1, meaning Enzo Amore gets to do the full entrance. We're just that lucky I guess but the fans are still eating it up at this point. Since everything is bigger in Texas, it would make sense for Big Cass to win here tonight. We hear about some of the bigger names but Cass is going to toss all of them out because Cass is like HBK in 1995. Chris Jericho is in at #2 as his bad luck in the Rumble draws continue (this is his third time as #2).

Cass tosses him down with a fall away slam but an early Empire Elbow misses. The Walls are broken up and it's Kalisto in at #3 after only ninety seconds. A springboard dropkick staggers Cass and a regular one drops Jericho. Cass can't powerslam Kalisto and it's some kicks to cut Cass down again. Mojo Rawley is in at #4 as we're not even three minutes and fifteen seconds in yet. Corey: "Smackdown Live's resident blithering

idiot." Lawler: "That's an insult to blithering idiots".

Cass takes Rawley into the corner while the other two are down on the apron. Jericho breaks four hours in the Rumble to give him the all time record as Jack Gallagher is in at #5. The length of the aisle really becomes an issue here as Jack takes forever to get to the ring. Once there though he cleans house with the umbrella, including a low blow to a posing Jericho. One heck of a toss sends Kalisto to the mat and it's Mark Henry in at #6.

Everyone is down when his music hits but Gallagher has enough time to get up and stomp on Jericho by the time he gets there. Gallagher's headbutt just annoys Mark so he tosses Jack through the ropes (not an elimination). Jack does his Mary Poppins dive with the umbrella and is promptly eliminated. Braun Strowman is in at #7, taking twenty five seconds from the start of his music to get to the ring. Jericho hides on the floor (Jericho: "HE'S HUGE!") as Strowman gets rid of Mojo, Cass, Kalisto and Henry, the latter after a battle of the giants.

Sami Zayn is in at #8 and is stupid enough to charge into the ring and slug away as fast as he can. Sami stops a charge with a boot but tries a suplex for some reason. Strowman misses a charge into the post but comes right back with a running splash in the corner as Big Show is #9 (to a VERY strong reaction, oddly enough).

We get the big, long walk to the ring where Sami is down in the corner and Jericho is still on the floor. Strowman clotheslines Show down without much effort but a chokeslam cuts him down. Jericho picks now to come back in and is promptly punched down, leaving the giants to lift each other up for failed slam attempts. Strowman manages to muscle Show out though and is the only one standing. The debuting Tye Dillinger is #10 (in the perfect (ten) entrance), giving us Jericho, Strowman, Zayn and Dillinger. Tye goes straight at Strowman with forearms and left hands as Sami gets up to help him slug away at the giant.

They get suplexed down without much effort though and it's James Ellsworth in at #11. He and Carmella run to the ring (in a relationship that was never explained) but don't get in, allowing Tye and Sami to pull

Strowman to the apron. Dean Ambrose is in at #12 and tricks Ellsworth into charging in on his own where Strowman eliminates him in all of ten seconds. That's better than I was expecting. Dean gets in but can't do much with Strowman (well duh) but Tye and Sami get back up to help Dean out. That earns them all running clotheslines in the corner and it's Baron Corbin in at #13.

That means four on one on Strowman, who shrugs them all away. Strowman dumps Tye but Sami grabs him by the beard for a breather. A Helluva Kick rocks Strowman and Corbin gets rid of the monster after a star making performance. Dean hits a quick Dirty Deeds on Corbin but doesn't try to eliminate him. Dean never was the smartest guy in the world.

Kofi Kingston is in at #14 and the countdown is on to the cool save. Kofi gets knocked into the ropes and Corbin does his slide underneath the ropes into a clothesline on Dean. The Miz is in at #15 (thankfully with Maryse), giving us Jericho (STILL on the floor), Sami, Ambrose, Corbin and Miz at the moment.

A Skull Crushing Finale drops Dean but Miz doesn't go for the elimination. Deep Six cuts Miz off as the crowd oddly dies for a bit. For no logical reason, Kofi climbs to the top of the post but gets knocked down onto his chest. He still manages to hang on though and scores with Trouble in Paradise on Corbin. Sheamus is in at #16 and it's time for some powerslams. Miz backs away from Sheamus but gets caught in the ten forearms to the chest. Jericho gets back up and is promptly Brogue Kicked down.

Big E. is in at #17 and it's a quick abdominal stretch on Miz, allowing for some spanking. If that's what he's into I guess. The ring is getting too full and Rusev (with a broken nose) makes it even worse at #18. Right hands have Dean in trouble but no one is seriously close to being eliminated.

Sheamus gets in a hard knee on Miz and it's Cesaro in at #19. It's an early Swing to Miz and a second to Sami. Jerry: "Use him as a weapon!" Ambrose and Kofi are swung as well, followed by Big E. and Corbin but Rusev saves Sheamus from the same fate for some reason. You might notice

a lot of names being swung and that's because there are WAY too many people in the ring.

Xavier Woods is in at #20, giving us Jericho, Zayn, Ambrose, Corbin, Kingston, Miz, Sheamus, Big E. Rusev, Cesaro and Woods. We're two thirds of the way into the match and over half of the people are still in. New Day beats Sheamus up and Woods has to save Kofi from an elimination at Miz's hands. A pair of boots rock Miz but he's not going anywhere yet. Bray Wyatt, with the lights going out, is in at #21 and the Fireflies coming out during the match is a cool visual.

Miz gets the release Rock Bottom and house is cleaned until Woods stares Wyatt down in a call back to Woods being terrified of Bray. Woods is sent to the apron and Kofi is put there next to him. Big E. saves his buddies from Cesaro and Sheamus as Apollo Crews is in at #22. Crews' standing moonsault hits Miz as this is looking like a regular battle royal rather than the Rumble. Big E. pulls Woods and Kofi back inside but Sheamus and Cesaro get rid of all three of them at once to let the ring breathe a bit. Sheamus tries to dump Cesaro but Jericho runs in to get rid of both of them. Well the ring is certainly emptier in a hurry.

Randy Orton (of the Wyatt Family because reasons) is in at #23 with a quick RK0 to Corbin and Rusev. Sami goes up top for some reason and dives right into another RK0. Dolph Ziggler is in at #24 and superkicks abound. The fans are begging for Goldberg to come in and get rid of some of these people but have to settle for Luke Harper at #25. We have five spots left and Goldberg, Undertaker and Brock Lesnar still to go. Harper gets rid of Crews but stops for a staredown with Orton. Wyatt has to play peacekeeper until Harper clotheslines Bray down. Orton breaks up Sister Abigail on Bray with an RK0 as the ring is too full again.

Brock Lesnar is in at #26 and now we can get rid of some people. Ziggler and Ambrose are tossed with ease and it's Suplex/F5 City. Everyone is down and the fans want Goldberg at #27. Instead it's Enzo Amore in at #27 and I'll let you figure out what happens. Graves: "THIS MAY BE THE GREATEST MOMENT OF MY LIFE!!!" Brock throws some suplexes until Goldberg is in at #28 for the big showdown. A spear and a clothesline get rid of Lesnar in all of fifteen seconds, stunning both the crowd and commentary

at once. Sami eats a Jackhammer and Orton/Wyatt take a double spear.

Goldberg is the only man standing and it's Undertaker in at #29 to a ROAR. Thankfully he appears in the ring instead of doing the ridiculously long walk down the ramp. Cole: "THIS IS A MOMENT!" Well those are what matter more than anything else. Corbin and Rusev break up the showdown and are promptly eliminated. A spear takes Undertaker down but Goldberg turns his attention to eliminate Harper, allowing Undertaker to dump him. Undertaker chokeslams a few people and it's Roman Reigns at #30 (imagine the booing) to give us Jericho, Sami, Miz, Wyatt, Orton, Undertaker and Reigns.

That means another staredown and Reigns wins the slugout. The fans are LIVID and call this BS until Undertaker stops the Superman Punch with a chokeslam. Undertaker dumps Miz and Zayn like they're nothing but takes too long calling for a Tombstone, allowing Reigns to dump him. That earns Reigns a glare to set up the Wrestlemania main event.

Jericho is dead so Reigns tosses him without much effort, giving Jericho the most meaningless hour run in Rumble history. Reigns is left alone with Orton and Wyatt with the double teaming starting in short order. The hanging DDT plants Reigns but Superman Punches get Roman out of trouble. Wyatt is eliminated but it's an RKO and a clothesline to send Orton to Wrestlemania at 1:02:08.

Rating: D. And that's being pretty generous. There are tons of problems here, but we'll start with all the midcarders who were around forever and did nothing. Here are some of the people who weren't going to win but were in the match for at least twenty minutes each:

Sami Zayn (47:12)

Dean Ambrose (26:55)

Baron Corbin (32:39)

Miz (32:44)

Rusev (22:31)

Those five names combined for one elimination. That's a crazy amount of time to basically do nothing. If they're not going to be factors (and none of them were as they were almost all glorified cannon fodder), don't leave them out there go clog up the ring. It doesn't do Sami any good to be out there for forty five minutes and do nothing, just like it doesn't help Miz to be there for half an hour so people can beat on him. Jericho was a potential winner and stayed in there over an hour (spending a lot of it on the floor) but what good is an hour stay if he's tossed out like he's nothing after a mere two eliminations?

That brings us to the second problem: the three big names. This match was built around Goldberg, Brock Lesnar and Undertaker (the three of them and Cena are dead center on the post) and they combined to get rid of TEN people (over a third of the eliminations) despite being in the match for less time combined than any of the five names mentioned above. None of them made the final four but they cleared the way for the grouping. That's some really bad planning and a lack of drama, especially when it makes everyone left look like afterthoughts. Let one of them be there as a dragon for the winner to slay at the very least.

Throw in a lack of meaningful surprises (Reigns was the only name of value not announced in advance) and no nostalgia to be seen (but we needed Apollo Crews and Dolph Ziggler to combine for ten minutes in the ring and not get rid of anyone) and there was very little to care about for the biggest part of the Rumble. Strowman stuff was fun, but after him there was a FIFTEEN MINUTE stretch with no eliminations. This was a terribly planned out Rumble and managed to turn one of the most entertaining matches of the year into something incredibly boring.

Overall Rating: C+. It says a lot when the Royal Rumble is the only bad thing on the show. Other than that, the worst match is....I guess the women's match? This show was rather awesome but the Rumble itself was such a mess that it brings the rest of the show way down. This was a good show that could have been great and I have no idea how they thought that was the right idea with the Rumble. That should usually be the most important thing on the show but it felt like something they threw together here, which really misses the point. Fix the Rumble and it's a classic. As it is, it's just good.

Ratings Comparison

Naomi/Nikki Bella/Becky Lynch vs. Alexa Bliss/Mickie James/Natalya

Original: C

Redo: C-

Sheamus and Cesaro vs. Anderson and Gallows

Original: D+

Redo: C+

Nia Jax vs. Sasha Banks

Original: C-

Redo: D+

Bayley vs. Charlotte Flair

Original: C+

Redo: B-

Kevin Owens vs. Roman Reigns

Original: B

Redo: B+

Rich Swann vs. Neville

Original: C+

Redo: B-

John Cena vs. AJ Styles

Original: A-

Redo: A

Royal Rumble

Original: C+

Redo: D

Overall Rating

Original: B+

Redo: C+

That Rumble rating is ridiculous. Most of the rest of the matches are in the same ballpark though and that's a good thing.

Here's the original review if you're interested:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2017/01/29/royal-rumble-2017-i-can-go-with-that/>

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Smackdown – January 22, 2021:

Fun Times

Smackdown

Date: January 22, 2021

Location: Tropicana Field, St. Petersburg, Florida

Commentators: Michael Cole, Corey Graves

We're just over a week away from the Royal Rumble and that means it is time to start the last push towards the pay per view. Tonight features a title match of its own with Big E. defending the Intercontinental Title against an upgraded Apollo Crews, but Roman Reigns is not going to be happy and that could be great. Let's get to it.

[Here are last week's results if you need a recap.](#)

We open with a recap of last week's show with Adam Pearce being set for the Royal Rumble title match against Roman Reigns but then having it switched out to Kevin Owens through some trickery.

Here are Roman Reigns and Paul Heyman for an opening chat. Reigns laughs off the idea of Card Subject To Change because Adam Pearce swapped himself out of the title match. You won't be seeing Kevin Owens here tonight Reigns doesn't want him here. Reigns comes here and goes to work because that's what he does. He even put his health in danger, but what if he gets hurt? Man his back and neck have been bothering him lately. His ankles have been messed up since college. What if he just said his back was hurting too badly to wrestle at the Royal Rumble?

Cue Pearce to say this has gotten out of hand. Reigns doesn't want to hear it and says Pearce needs to make his way back into the title scene. Pearce doesn't buy that but Reigns says that Pearce can't handle this. He hasn't had a match in six years because he doesn't have the heart. Maybe that's why he never made it to the WWE.

Reigns and Heyman take this as disrespect, which means Pearce is disrespecting the family. Therefore, Heyman wants to do something about it and challenges Pearce to a fight. Heyman, citing his status as a New Yorker, says he will whip Pearce's a**. Pearce says it's on and Reigns promises Pearce is getting whipped too. See, I think we all know where this is going, but it's still fun to see how it goes down the obvious path.

Here's Sami Zayn to handcuff himself to the barricade for a protest, while declaring his entrance in the Royal Rumble.

Women's Tag Team Titles: Charlotte/Asuka vs. Riott Squad

Charlotte/Asuka are defending, Billie Kay is here with the Squad, and Asuka seems fine after being terrified of Alexa Bliss on Raw. Charlotte beats on Ruby Riott to start as Natalya and Tamina are watching backstage. Asuka comes in for a few shots but a Kay distraction lets Riott bring Liv Morgan in. A high crossbody hits Charlotte and we take a break. Back with Morgan snapping off a headscissors on Charlotte and Riott sending her face first into the corner for two.

Charlotte finally kicks Riott away and nails the fall away slam to send Morgan into the corner. The Downward Spiral into the top turnbuckle allows the tag off to Asuka. The sliding knee gets two as everything breaks down. Asuka German suplexes Morgan but Riott comes back in to roll her up. Billie accidentally distracts the ref though meaning no count. Instead it's a running hip attack to Morgan and Charlotte hits Natural Selection to finish Morgan at 8:32.

Rating: C. The wrestling was fine, but are we really just going to ignore Asuka being scared of Alexa Bliss and losing to her clean? Or everything with Charlotte and Lacey Evans/Ric Flair? Nothing at all? You might think that was worthy of a mention on this show but this was a run of the mill match with the titles being a backdrop to Billie screwing up again.

Post break, Billie tries to make amends by having the Squad in

the Royal Rumble. She offers to help them practice by being Bianca Belair and Carmella (with impressions included) but the Squad, being as nice as they can, say Billie is out.

Here is a dressed up Daniel Bryan for a chat. He is VERY happy that the Royal Rumble coming up because it is all about the drama and the questions of what number you will have and when you are coming out. It makes him feel alive because he is ready to win and move on to main event Wrestlemania. Cue Cesaro to say that was a nice explanation, but he could have done it better (and in five languages).

Cesaro talks about being the first ever Andre the Giant battle royal winner so he will know how to win the Royal Rumble. Bryan is ready to fight right now but Cesaro says that since Bryan isn't dressed to wrestle, he'll issue an open challenge. Cue Dolph Ziggler, to say he can do anything in the ring and Cesaro is one of the few who can match him (Ziggler: "Sorry DB but it's not 2014 anymore."). The challenge is accepted.

Dolph Ziggler vs. Cesaro

Daniel Bryan is on commentary as they go to the grappling to start. Ziggler's sleeper doesn't work and Cesaro hits him in the face, setting up a rather long Cesaro Swing. They go to the pinfall reversal sequence with Ziggler getting two but having his superkick blocked. The Fameasser gives Ziggler two and we hit the sleeper again. That's reversed into the Neutralizer and Ziggler is done at 3:43.

Rating: C+. They didn't have much time here but Cesaro getting momentum is nice to see, even if there is no reason to believe that it is going to go anywhere. I've been burned by Cesaro's pushes being canceled too many times now but at least we're getting a little something here. It's better than nothing after all these years.

We recap Sasha Banks challenging Reginald to a match before she is willing to face Carmella again.

Sasha Banks vs. Reginald

Reginald gives Sasha a flower to start so Sasha slaps the taste out of his mouth (even Carmella's mouth drops open for that). Sasha climbs the ropes for a hurricanrana but Reginald flips forward to land on his feet. A waistlock doesn't work for Sasha as Reginald backflips out and lands on his feet outside. Banks hits a baseball slide and whips him into the steps...where Reginald front flips off of them and sticks the landing. Back in and Reginald dives over a monkey flip attempt and then counters a sunset flip.

A Rey Mysterio sitout bulldog works better but Banks seems to tweak her knee. Reginald flips away from a basement dropkick but a powerbomb is countered into an armdrag. Banks manages to send him outside for the Meteora off the apron. Back in and Banks grabs his hands while still on the mat, only to pull herself up for another Meteora. Something like La Mistica is completely messed up but Banks pulls him into the Bank Statement for the tap at 4:00. Cole: "Now the sommellier has something to whine about!" Graves: "I can't even with you."

Rating: C-. I have no idea what to think here as this was much more of a gymnastics routine that made Reginald look like a star for reasons I don't quite understand. Banks vs. Carmella is set up, but I'm not sure why they went this way to get here. The match was fun, but how does this make me want to see Carmella get a title shot?

Paul Heyman compliments Roman Reigns for setting up the match with Adam Pearce because he knows Reigns has a plan. Reigns says he just handed Heyman a microphone and now Heyman has to deal with this. Heyman panics.

We recap Apollo Crews cheating to become #1 contender last week.

Intercontinental Title: Big E. vs. Apollo Crews

Crews is challenging and charges into a belly to belly to start. The apron splash connects but Crews is back with a pump kick into the standing moonsault for two. Big E. hits the Rock Bottom out of the corner for the same and Crews heads outside with Big E. saying Crews made a mistake with the slap. Crews gets in a shot on the floor and heads back inside to go up top. Hold on though as Sami, still handcuffed, unlocks the cuffs as Crews hits a missile dropkick. Sami runs in for the Helluva Kick to Crews for the DQ at 2:55.

Post match Sami hits a Helluva Kick for Big E. as well.

Kevin Owens is in his car because he isn't allowed in the ring tonight and says this is all going to end with Roman Reigns at the Royal Rumble. Owens talks about his tattoos telling a story, including his grandparents' initials on his knuckles. They always supported him but they passed away before he could make it to WWE. Both of them had horrible illnesses but they kept fighting, just like he'll do at the Royal Rumble when he becomes champion.

The Street Profits bring Sonya Deville (talking to Dolph Ziggler, who leaves before they get there), a fruit basket to congratulate her on her new job. They don't get why she is hanging out with Ziggler but they get to the point: they want their rematch. Sonya isn't sure though because they held the titles for a long time and Ford's knee is still banged up. Some more teams need a chance and once the Profits are healthy, they can be back in the title scene. That seems to be cool, but the Profits are not happy after she leaves.

We recap the debut of Bayley's talk show last week where she challenged Bianca Belair to an obstacle course race.

Bayley and Belair come out to go over the obstacles with Bayley going first. She takes her time and walks around some of the walls she is supposed to climb, and then drops the Chad Gable she is supposed to carry. Bayley finishes with a time of

1:12 and then says let's EST this course for Belair, meaning it's a lot harder. Belair starts fast but has to fireman's carry Otis instead of Gable....which she promptly does, and then dunks a basketball to win with 17 seconds left. Well that was impressive. Bayley pelts the basketball at Belair's stomach though and the beatdown is on, including Bayley throwing her into the basketball goal.

Dominick tells Rey Mysterio that he has this, despite what Rey thinks.

Dominick Mysterio vs. King Corbin

Corbin starts fast by knocking Dominick to the floor, setting up a heck of a clothesline. Dominick fights back but the 619 is countered. A big right hand knocks Dominick silly and the End of Days finishes at 2:11. Well that was abrupt.

Paul Heyman vs. Adam Pearce

Pearce is in workout gear and Heyman, in his suit, tapes his fist on the way to the ring. Hold on though as Heyman tweaks his ankle on the steps and goes down. The referee checks on him but Heyman says "CARD SUBJECT TO CHANGE." And yes indeed here's Roman Reigns to hit the Superman Punch to send Pearce to the floor.

Reigns hits him low and sends him into the fan screens before taking him up to the stands like he did to Kevin Owens. Speaking of Owens, here he is in a hoodie to beat on Reigns. Owens is sent into the barricade and they head inside, where Owens nails a Stunner. Referees come out as Owens takes him outside again and beats on Reigns some more. A Stunner on the floor drops Reigns again and the Pop Up powerbomb puts him through the announcers' table to end the show.

Overall Rating: C. I know we go over this every week but Smackdown continues to be so much better than Raw for one major reason: the show feels fun. This show didn't have a ton

of great wrestling but some angles were advanced and a hot ending angle made up for some of the weaker points. The pay per view is all but set on the Smackdown side and they did what they needed to do here for one of the last shows. It's nothing great, but it's not like Raw left the bar that high.

Results

Charlotte/Asuka b. Riott Squad – Natural Selection to Morgan

Cesaro b. Dolph Ziggler – Neutralizer

Sasha Banks b. Reginald – Bank Statement

Apollo Crews b. Big E. via DQ when Sami Zayn interfered

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Smackdown – January 1, 2021: Happy Smart Show

Smackdown

Date: January 1, 2021

Location: Tropicana Field, St. Petersburg, Florida

Commentators: Michael Cole, Corey Graves

We have finally made it to the new year and that means it is time to start getting ready for the Royal Rumble. Last week saw a pair of huge matches as Kevin Owens got cheated out of his shot at the Universal Title and Big E. won the Intercontinental Title. That sounds like a good place to start for the new year so let's get to it.

[Here are last week's results if you need a recap.](#)

In Memory Of Jon Huber/Luke Harper.

We open with a long recap of Roman Reigns needing Jey Uso's help to retain the Universal Title over Kevin Owens.

Here are Roman Reigns, Jey Uso and Paul Heyman to open things up. Reigns says Happy New Year and talks about how rough 2020 was. However, when you're the Head of the Table and the Tribal Chief, you can make it work. Look at everything he accomplished in 2020. Heyman is the most honest man he has ever done business with and Jey has had the best year of his career by just listening to Reigns. Reigns praises Jey for being Main Event Uso all along and knocking it out of the park, which is why Reigns loves him.

Cue Kevin Owens but Reigns says turn the music off. Reigns rants about how Owens won't go away no matter what and he's sick of Owens as a result. Owens says that since he's still standing here, Reigns and his family have failed. That failure makes it clear that the Big Dog has been replaced by a giant b****. As for tonight, Owens is here to fight Jey and after that beating, Reigns' family will have nothing to celebrate.

We look at Big E. winning the Intercontinental Title last week.

Big E. vs. King Corbin

Non-title with Sami Zayn, who is already ranting about a conspiracy, on commentary. They run the ropes to start with Big E. elbowing him down for an early two. Corbin gets in a shot to the face of his own and then hits Big E. in the throat. Big E. gets sent into the post (Sami: "You love to see that.") so Corbin tries the slide under the post clothesline, only to walk into the Big Ending. That's enough to draw Sami in for the DQ at 2:52.

Post match the Knights Of The Lone Wolf come in for the beatdown on Big E., drawing in Apollo Crews for the save.

Apollo Crews/Big E. vs. Sami Zayn/King Corbin

Joined in progress because it was sanctioned during the break and we don't need to waste time seeing that happen. Sami elbows Crews in the corner and hands it off to Corbin for a running clothesline. Crews gets sent outside for a cheap shot from the Knights, followed by being thrown back outside for no cheap shot this time. Back in and Crews snaps off a powerslam, allowing the hot tag to Big E.

The suplexes abound, setting up the Warrior Splash (Graves: "Like getting run over by a Big Rig.") for two. Corbin grabs Deep Six as Sami argues with the Knights on the floor. Crews comes back in to go after Corbin in a Backlash 2016 Kickoff sequel. Corbin doesn't like that and argues with Sami before walking out. That's enough for Crews to grab the Toss Powerbomb to finish Sami at 6:13.

Rating: C-. Not much of a match but it made Crews look good in the process. I'm not sure what that means going forward but if it means Crews vs. Big E. instead of Corbin vs. Big E., I certainly approve. Big E. wasn't really a factor here, though he had his big moment last week already. Now build him up a challenger in a hurry.

Kevin Owens talks to Adam Pearce about the match with Jey Uso, but Pearce says he can't do that because it's just asking for trouble. Owens can have anyone else on the roster instead. Owens: "Fine. I'll take Roman Reigns." That's enough to get Pearce to agree to the match with Uso.

Big E. talks about how things have been good for him since he won, with fans celebrating him from Rome to Rochester (Brodie Lee's hometown). He has had little Amanda's (Brodie Lee's wife) and Nolan's (Brodie Lee's son) celebrating with him and like the 1967 Toronto Maple Leafs (Brodie Lee's hockey team), he will be a fighting champion. The open challenge is on and Apollo Crews is right there to accept.

Riott Squad vs. Tamina/Natalya

Billie Kay is here with Tamina and Natalya, who she has put together to deal with the Squad. Morgan rolls Natalya up to start but gets shoved down as Billie yells at everyone. The distraction lets Natalya get double dropkicked into the corner so it's off to Ruby vs. Tamina. That doesn't last long as it's quickly off to Liv for a double Russian legsweep. Hang on though as Billie is now in the Squad's corner, with Ruby yelling at her a bit. Billie tries to play coach, allowing Liv to roll Tamina up for the pin at 2:25.

Post match, Billie celebrates the victory.

We look back at last week's Women's Tag Team Title match.

Bayley/Carmella vs. Bianca Belair/Sasha Banks

Reginald is here with Carmella and Bayley. Belair takes Carmella down without much effort to start and then lifts her up by the arm. Bayley comes in and gets dropkicked down for a trip to the floor. That means a dive from Banks for two back inside as we take a break. Back with Bayley getting two on Belair and working on the arm, which was apparently hurt during the break.

The double arm crank doesn't last long as Belair suplexes her way to freedom, only to have Carmella break up the tag attempt. A kick to the ribs sets up another armbar but Belair powers out without much trouble. It's off to Banks for the trash talk off with Carmella, who sends her to the apron. Banks hits the running knees in the corner so Bayley comes in for the save. Belair tries to use her hair to pull Banks over for the tag but Bayley grabs it instead.

That just earns her a hair whip into the post, leaving Banks to get superkicked by Carmella. The Bronco Buster misses though and the Bank Statement goes on, with Reginald pulling Carmella to the floor. The threat of violence from Banks has Reginald backflipping off the apron but the distraction lets Carmella hit a swinging X Factor for the pin at 10:04.

Rating: C. I guess one Carmella title feud wasn't enough. It's not exactly thrilling but it'll work fine enough for another title match if they have to. That isn't going to last long term but at least Banks is likely to have another successful defense in there. Carmella has been a little better as of late so this is hardly a disaster, but it's a little disappointing.

Roman Reigns isn't happy with the main event being made because whoever made the match doesn't respect him. Reigns sends Uso to find out who did it.

Sonya Deville is back and everyone is surprised to see her.

Here are the Street Profits for the 2021 Smoketacular. Montez Ford lists off all of their accomplishments this year but Angelo Dawkins wants to know what is under a blanket. That would be a drum set, because Dawkins needs to play a bit. Ford has some predictions for 2021, like the "I Was Intercontinental Champion" shirt (which they introduced) becoming the #1 seller at WWE Shop. Next up we have Dolph Ziggler, who has ripped off Shawn Michaels for so long that he is going to be dubbed the Heartache Kid. Cue Ziggler and

Robert Roode and the big beatdown is on, with Ford's leg being destroyed with post and chairs.

Post break, Ziggyler and Roode say that's all on the Street Profits' hands because they want the Tag Team Titles. They want their title shot and won't stop until they get it. Of note: the team now seems to officially be the Dirty Dawgs, making me wonder which names were rejected.

Daniel Bryan/Otis vs. Cesaro/Shinsuke Nakamura

This is fallout from Cesaro/Nakamura not liking Bryan training with Chad Gable (at ringside) and Otis earlier today. Cesaro headlocks Bryan down to start and hands it off to Nakamura for a chinlock as we hear about Cesaro and Nakamura's battle royal success. Bryan is sent outside for an uppercut from Cesaro as we take a break.

Back with Cesaro slamming Bryan down and handing it off to Nakamura for the kicks. Bryan avoids a big one though and it's off to Otis to start wrecking things. The Caterpillar hits Cesaro and Bryan comes back in for a sunset flip on Nakamura. Back up and Nakamura's armbar doesn't work, as Bryan reverses into the YES Lock for the tap at 10:00.

Rating: C+. The Otis/Gable addition was a little weird but, again, they are already starting to rise up the card a little bit while also gaining some credibility. I'm not sure how Cesaro and Nakamura have already fallen down, but the Nakamura ship sailed years ago. At least Bryan is being kept strong though, and that could mean a lot in the future.

Roman Reigns gives Jey Uso one more pep talk.

Kevin Owens vs. Jey Uso

Owens unloads on him to start and stomps Uso down with no trouble. They head outside with Owens hitting a backplash on the floor, followed by another for two back inside. Back in

and Owens starts in on Jey's recently injured leg, including crushing it on the rope. Uso gets in some right hands for a breather and a superkick puts Owens down on the floor. They head outside with Owens hitting his own superkick and throwing him over the announcers' table. We take a break and come back with Jey shoving Owens off the top. Jey has to bail out of the Superfly Splash though and Owens hits the Stunner for the pin at 7:25.

Rating: C. The post break stuff was rather short and the match was almost a squash. This should be setting up the next Reigns vs. Owens match at the Rumble and if so, they did a nice job of reheating Owens in a hurry. It wasn't a competitive match or even close to one of the most part, but that wasn't the kind of match they should have had here.

Post match the beatdown is on, with Owens telling Reigns to come help his family. Jey gets handcuffed to the top rope so the leg can be further destroyed. Owens finally gets tired of the beating and unhooks the cuffs, allowing Jey to stagger up the aisle. That just earns Jey another beating, including a superkick onto a table. Owens loads up something but here's Reigns to jump him from behind. Jey grabs a chair and the big beatdown is on, with Reigns unloading with said chair. Owens gets sent into various screens and then gets tossed off the stage through a table to finally end the beating.

Overall Rating: C+. There wasn't much done here, but with the show going up against the college football playoff, they weren't going to have any kind of an audience in the first place. The wrestling was just mostly there, but it does seem to be setting up things for the future, which is the best way to use a show like this. Don't waste the big stuff when you won't have an audience, and they didn't make such a mistake here. Not a great show, but a smartly done one.

Results

Big E. b. King Corbin via DQ when Sami Zayn interfered

Apollo Crews/Big E. b. King Corbin/Sami Zayn – Toss Powerbomb to Zayn

Riott Squad b. Tamina/Natalya – Rollup to Tamina

Carmella/Bayley b. Sasha Banks/Bianca Belair – Running X Factor to Banks

Daniel Bryan/Otis b. Shinsuke Nakamura/Cesaro – YES Lock to Nakamura

Kevin Owens b. Jey Uso – Stunner

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